MOONS OF GRANDEUR

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

1st Ed

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WIILLAM ROSE BENÉT

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MOONS OF GRANDEUR

A BOOK OF POEMS

BY

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

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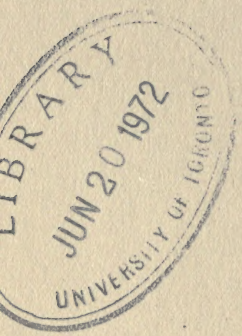

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

TO

HENRY MARTYN HOYT

Remembering 1906-1920

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MOONS OF GRANDEUR

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GASPARA STAMPA

"Saffo de' nostri tempi alta Gaspara"
VENICE—CINQUECENTO

"I burned, I wept, I sang; I burn, sing, weep again,
And I shall weep and sing, I shall forever burn
Until or death or time or fortune's turn
Shall still my eye and heart, still fire and pain."

LIKE flame, like wine, across the still lagoon
The colors of the sunset stream.
Spectral in heaven as climbs the frail veiled moon,
So climbs my dream.
Out of the heart's eternal torture fire
No eastern phoenix risen—
Only the naked soul, spent with desire,
Bursts its prison.

O love, magnificent and dreadful love
At last consuming heart and brain,
Palling all days with thoughts we weary of,
Weary of pain,—

Gaspara Stampa [CONTINUED]

O golden city set in the sun's heart,
Isled in a golden sea,
Yet what a vague phantasmal counterpart
Of what might be,

Darkness comes down upon your domes and towers,
Dark gondolas gliding under evening bells.
Deep night spreads burning over faded hours
The hell of hells.
The shadows mock me with his step, his sigh.
The treacherous tapers flare
And flaw; but though I stare with burning eye
He is not there.

Collalto, my illustrious lord, it is
So strange! One word, one sign
Would turn, like Cana's metamorphosis,
These tears to wine,
Wine from my heart—or shall my blood be shed
To seal the crumpled scroll,
Who gave you living, who would give you dead
Body and soul?

Capitals, columns, arches, sculptures fall,
The ivy crawls on Istrian stone;
Tower and palace, chapel, drawbridge, all
Time leaves prone;

Gaspara Stampa [CONTINUED]

Only our Alps whose blue without one stain
Blends into higher light—
My namesake stream of the Trevisian plain—
Time finds bright.

Yet will not Time, kind to the Paduan, scroll
My name at last with yours
Vittoria, Veronica? If the soul
Of song endures
I grasp eternity. O barren bliss
Beside pomegranate flowers
Swayed in the moonlight, and one secret kiss,—
Bliss once ours.

For France is far, so far, my dearest lord,
Beyond the Alps so far, men say,
One little word, even one little word
Loses its way.
Is it not piteous then to die, to live
In death, to gasp unheard
In thirst unslaked for what one word could give,
One little word?

And for a faith to tread consuming heat
And for a love to look on death
And to go robed in fire, in fire complete,
With sharp-drawn breath,
While the trapped heart, grown frenzied with its pain,

Gaspara Stampa [CONTINUED]

For joy once scorning fate
Storms with wild wings, again and yet again,
Your iron gate?

The gods returned to earth when Venice broke
Like Venus from the dawn-encircled sea.
Wide laughed the skies with light when Venice woke
Crowned of antiquity,
And as with spoil of gems bewildering earth
Art in her glorious mind
Jewelled all Italy for joy's rebirth
To all mankind.

And we were heirs, true bounden heirs of this
Epoch of glittering life and bannered love
Even as we whispered in our earliest kiss
The joy thereof,
Ere sunlight on a condottiere's lance,
A bitter trumpet blown
Scattered your words and swept your heart toward
France,
Left me alone.

The hyssop on the reed, this, this to drink
In this dark hour shall seal it as the last.
No word, my lord—and no more thoughts to think
When this is past.
Titian awhile his garden walk may tread
And Sansovino keep
My words, words you may read when I am dead,
But I—would sleep.

"THE DAUGHTER OF INIQUITY"

In the wild days, in the wild days when all Romagna lay
Blood-soaked by the ferocity of Borgia, loosed on Italy,
One woman faced him to the last—for that was Catherine's way!

The dawn of a new century crept over Forli town.
White and immaculate fell the snow on the besiegers, camped below;
And Catherine from the parapet of her battlements looked down.

The moonlight over Forli town lit up the trampled plain,
The enemy's camp, each street and square spattered with blood. And high in air
Catherine, with chin on breast, looked down, and reckoned up the slain.

Her captains and her engineers stood in the shadows, still.
Mournful and pale the cold moonlight gleamed upon ramp and tower that night,
But troubled not the Countess' brows, knit by the Sforza will.

"The Daughter of Iniquity" [CONTINUED]

A month of beating off assault since Imola flamed and fell
And the town's signory, craven then, flung wide the gates to Cæsar's men,
Though Catherine lashed them with her scorn, and held the citadel.

Here was no soft and feeble flesh—Lucrezia's golden shame.
Here stood a woman steeled in grief, ravaged by sorrows past belief,
A condottiere's bastard born, who bore the Sforza name.

"On such a night as this," she thought. "The infamy came to pass
When, as the carded flax took fire, three poigniards flashed upon my sire
And the Duke Galeazzo fell, slain at Saint Stephen's mass."

"On such a night as this," she thought, her thin lips tight with pain.
"That apostate priest who blessed the bread whereon the assassins' blood was shed
Watched for the ending of their work done in Saint Stephen's fane!"

"*The Daughter of Iniquity*" [CONTINUED]

"Yet Cæsar, Valentino, mark my single purpose here!
Whatever may be dealt or done, I walk within the steps of one
Who—though he sowed and reaped much shame —was never known to fear.

"They wed me to a scurvy hound called richest prince in Rome,
Who sought Lorenzo's overthrow—that brave, superb Magnifico!—
The loutish clown Riario, clerk in his uncle's home!

"Yet his foul deed in Florence done, with the base Pazzi's aid,
Shows not so ill as fratricide, whence Naples, Cæsar, spurned your pride!
The Repetta's bargeman knew what deed made that dark night afraid!

"Under a shuddering sickly sun they brought the corpse to shore;
And terrible bestial sounds of woe came screaming from Saint Angelo
Where Alexander frothed in pain and clawed upon the floor.

" The Daughter of Iniquity " [CONTINUED]

" Remorse, in full consistory, he vowed—white lips
afoam,—
Repentance—ashes on his head! . . . But living
lust forgets the dead,
And Giulia Bella sways him still at the old game
in Rome.

" With fifteen thousand Papal troops you dare all
duchies then,
The mercenary Swiss brigade and Louis' lancers for
your aid?
Shame of the Purple, monster Duke, lay on—bring
up your men!

" I have surmounted many a death, ere this risked
all and won:
Ten years of plot and counterplot, rebellion, mur-
der, hate grown hot—
So now I trust no broken reed—be it my elder son.

" When rebels rose at Imola and killed the castel-
lan,
Think you I flinched? I rode all night, though
great with child. The morning light
Saw me still pacing forth and back before their
barbican.

"The Daughter of Iniquity" [CONTINUED]

"O Feo said, 'Tread not within! Their swords
are out to slay!'
But 'Come—alone—to parley here!' they cried.
I entered without fear.
They groveled ere one hour had passed. Theirs
was none other way.

"I faced the ride back: sixteen miles. I clung the
saddle-horn.
A ruddy mist before mine eyes mile after mile
would dance and rise.
The hoofs jarred 'Home!' The hoofs jarred
'Home!' . . . Next day my child was born.

"You Arab bastard of the Pope,—by the Blood,
what do you here?
Yonder in Rome your father plays with topaz,
purple chrysoprase,
Carbuncle and pink Indian pearl, half-slavering
o'er such gear!

"I saw your eyes, Cæsar, your lips' full scarlet,
your bronzed skin
Under your velvet bonnet doffed. Aye, with an
evil smile you scoffed.
But Prince of Darkness though you be, your siege
shall never win!"

. . . . . .

" The Daughter of Iniquity " [CONTINUED]

She lifted eyes and saw the stars bright-glistering
on the night.
She turned and strode among her peers, her cap-
tains and her engineers,
Into the castle, and, flambeau-lit, wound down the
stair's steep flight.

And like pale rose the New Year dawned. More furious the attack
Leapt up without. She sate within, grinding her teeth. *" You shall not win! "*
In the stone hearth the red sparks danced against the chimney-back.

See only! Was she girl again, entering the People's Gate;
In gold-embroidered cloak arrayed, in crimson satin and black brocade,
'Mid festooned flowers and censers swung, riding through Rome in state?

To grand Saint Peter's riding slow—her marriage day in Rome!
The vision wavered on the air. Then, suddenly and vivid there,
She saw against the arrassed wall—a different coming-home.

"The Daughter of Iniquity" [CONTINUED]

Stiffening silent into stone, her green-blue eyes looked through
The wall—*and saw the gala floats, and heard the populace split their throats*
While the artillery salvoes boomed. In prophecy she knew

The Borgia's captives passing slow by that same massive gate,
To crown his triumph. *A glimpse of gray yonder, the broad Flaminian Way*
Stretched o'er the flat Campagna—north. Escape? Alas, too late!

For on her wrists what fetters clanked! Her wild eyes, anguish-full,
Gazed up, and drooped, as wearily in that fell triumph, and heavily,
She trod—the last, least slave of all—a hostage to the Bull!

"No!" She sprang up. "A sortie then—at once! That shall not be!"
Great shadows writhed upon the wall. She shouted for her seneschal,
Paced with ground teeth, and knew her life in hopeless jeopardy.

" The Daughter of Iniquity " [CONTINUED]

They burned the great carved wainscot even, before the breach was made.
She heard the roaring of the sack; turned on the tower-stair, beaten back,
And, for an instant, wavered there—most desolate and afraid.

Then, straight recovered, proud she rose. " God knows what this may mean.
But since I stand at last at bay, we all die—'tis the only way! "
And she dispatched two trusted men to fire the magazine.

They heard the dull concussion boom; but prescience stifling speech
Warned them of failure, through the din, and that the foe swarmed on and in
Trampling along the corridors through one more widening breach.

So, in the moated tower, at last the Borgia strode to find
That perilous matron, stony-pale, standing like stone,—nor might prevail
By words, until two skulking braves pinioned her from behind.

"The Daughter of Iniquity" [CONTINUED]

And Yves d'Allegre could tell of her black year
deep underground,
Starving, for fear in cell to sup lest sweet white
powder in some cup
Dispatch her; sleepless, lest she be a corpse in
Tiber found.

Florence could tell what wrongs were wrought on
a woman chained and lone
Living the death beyond the dead. "For there
be things," she sometimes said,
"That, an' I told them simply true, would turn
the world to stone."

So be it. I know she raised one son strong as her
will was strong;
That the Black Bands in time became through
Italy a sign, a name
Wherewith, and with their leader's fame, Romagna
echoed long.

In the wild days, in the wild days when the Bull
gored Italy,
Through black mischance and heavy grief, a woman
held—beyond belief
Against the Borgia's power and pride, one small
lost seigniory!

LEGEND OF MICHELOTTO

So it befell, because the times were hard,
This Michelotto, Captain of the Guard,
Nigh to Cord Lane, in a vile drinking den
Lingered the last of Cæsar Borgia's men,
Having found beyond Viana, in the vale,
That stripped, stark blood-laced body, prone and pale,
Fixed eyes and wolf-teeth glittering to the stars.
Thus last he saw the Duke. So from all wars,
All coil of camp and court, he fled Navarre
To live at hazard by the outlier's star
Scornful of every faction—old and grim.

This was a night when musing fell on him,
Secret in Rome, strayed lately from the sea.

Sprawled on his lousy pallet it seemed that he
Was multiplied in forms around the room
Where on the floor a lantern made the gloom
Even more invading by its little light.
Some fifteen Michelottos were that night
Regarding him from all sides of his bed.
He clutched again the wineskin, and his head
Turned slow each way; his eyes revealed their whites.

Legend of Michelotto [CONTINUED]

This was, perhaps, one of his troubled nights,
For suddenly that raped Venetian bride,
Caracciolo's, crouched by his bedside
With hair dishevelled, eyes glaring wildly round.

One feels it discommoding that the drowned
From Tiber rise and walk, and come thus late;
Nor, boy Astorre, should you, smiling, wait
Blue by that window-grate the moon shines through.
Those emaciated wraiths that crowd round you
Forget how kindly you were used anon.

"Ecco! These two were vilest. Smilest? Smilest
Thou—thou—or thou, mine image? Fiends, be-
gone!"
Thus, elbow-raised, the gulping sbirro cries,
His coarse dark hair fallen tangled in his eyes.

He turned again. His hand groped for the wine.
There gleamed the poigniard-hilt 'twixt neck and
spine
Driven home. It quivered yet. Ah, how the wan
Forehead blood-smeared and dark eyes of this man,
The wried mouth gaping to its gurgling cry,
Called back the Ghetto midnight. . . . How
they ply
Dagger on dagger, till heavily he falls!
Sparks flit from flints. Beneath the bagnio walls
Wheels the white charger, champing at his load.

Legend of Michelotto [CONTINUED]

Truly, not thus a Captain General rode
Ere this through Rome!
So Gandia; let us hope
That Don Giovanni, captain to the Pope. . . .
But no, he glimmers yonder by the wall.
He bears the head that was so swift to fall
By that backhanded blow.
The head smiles too!

The Borgia's will it was to run him through
Because his wife was soft and weak of will.

As for the poisoned sleepers, how they fill
The earth-floored lean-to—many in their throes.
The Mantuan archbishop, I suppose,
Is he who lies the straightest, Giacomo's—
The protonotary—is the stiffest pose.
Gian the cardinal looks his pained surprise. . . .

The sbirro shook his mane, strained limbs to rise,
Sank back—and entered Don Alfonso's room.

High-ceiled, that great apartment in the gloom,
Save for the burning brazier, swarmed with night.
The strangler with the bowstring craves no light
However, and the fixed imperious glance
Of the cloaked Duke precludes one look askance.
Wail of all wails—O wail that rings forever!

Legend of Michelotto [CONTINUED]

Veined eyeballs starting, with a huge endeavor,
This Don Michele Coreglia heaved upright.

Lying or sitting 'tis no better plight
Even with the palms pressed tight against the eyes.
Ramiro in Cesena square, the cries
Of the rebels in their dungeon, beasts at bay!

Red—as the hands press eyeballs—red as they
Who fell at Capua—is the swimming light.
The shrieking of the nuns upbraids the night—
Or is it ghastly singing, far away:

All the power of earth and heaven
You were given!
Borgia, swords in Our Lady's heart
Are sharp, are seven:
Poigniards plunged to the bloody hilt,
Red daggers driven!

" Yet," groaned this Michelotto, swaying now
Upright, one arm across his streaming brow,
His bare feet shuffling on the earthen floor,
" Yet, thou dark man, I shall not see thee more,
King of these kakodaimons—but a king!
Ah, Cæsar, Satan, sire, if this one thing
Should pass—that thou couldst rise from earth and
tell . . . !"

Legend of Michelotto [CONTINUED]

A voice spoke then. A voice said "*Is it well*
To summon weary shadows out of Hell?"

In armor red as blood he stood revealed
The golden lilies quartered in his shield.
The outstretched hand—oh grisly strangest
thing!—
Flashed with the sapphire cardinalitial ring.
Three-pointed flame licked up from foot to head.

So Michelotto, with the dawn, lay dead.

THERE LIVED A LADY IN MILAN

There lived a lady in Milan
Wrought for a madness unto Man,
A fawn Il Moro could not tame;
Her beauty unbedecked with pearls
More than all Beatrice's girls,
Her eyes a secret subtle flame.

Brocade wherein her body dressed
Was hallowed; flowers her footstep pressed
Suspired incense ere they died.
Her father mazed with alchemy
Wrought in his cellar ceaselessly.
She lived in quiet, gentle pride.

And by her garden in his hour
Passed Leonardo, come with power
From Florence. So he saw her face
Bending above the shriveled stalks
Of autumn on the garden walks.
And Leonardo drank her grace.

She was as if a sunset were
With fresher colors, clearer air,
And a more golden coil of cloud.

There Lived a Lady in Milan [CONTINUED]

She was as if all citherns swooned
With one rich harmony myriad-tuned,
Haunting, enchanting, pure and proud.

And Leonardo said, " Ladye,
I know not what you do to me
Who have and have not, seek nor find.
The sea-shell and the falcon's feather,
Greece and the rock and shifting weather
Have taught me many things of mind.

" My heart has taught me many things,
And so have emperors, popes, and kings,
And so have leaves and green May-flies;
Yea, I have learned from bird and beast,
From slouching dwarf and ranting priest.
Yet, in the end, how am I wise?

" Though with dividers and a quill
I weave some miracle of will,—
Say, that men fly,—though I design
For peace or war a thousand things
Gaining applause from dukes and kings,—
Though soft and deft my colors shine,

" Though my quick wit breed thunderbolts
I may not loose on all these dolts,
Things they are babes to comprehend,—
Though from the crevice in stone or lime
I trace grave outlines mocking Time,—
I know when I am beaten, Friend!

There Lived a Lady in Milan [CONTINUED]

" Say that there lived of old a saint
Even Leonardo dared not paint,
Even Leonardo dared not draw,—
Too perfect in her breathing prime
For colors to transmit to time
Or quill attempt,—aye, ev'n in awe!

" Say this, cold histories, and say
I looked not on her from this day
Lest frenzied I destroy my art.
O golden lily,—how she stands
Listening! Beauty,—ah, your hands,
Your little hands tear out my heart!

" Do you not know you are so fair,
Brighter than springtime in the air?
What says your mirror to your mind? "
" Phantom," she whispered, " Do you plead
With ghostly gestures? . . . Ah, indeed,
Pity a lady deaf and blind

" Since birth! " . . . Then Leonardo turned
Saluting, though the sunset burned
In nimbus round her,—went his way
In daze, repeating " God's defect,
Even he!—and masterpiece elect! "
He never saw her from that day.

IL MORO IN LOCHES

Oh sly and subtle light! There! At this hour,
As ever, you gleam and linger. So I thrust
This parchment hand of mine, whose withered power
Mocks me, straight through your moted golden dust.
Warm! It is warmth the pores feel, warmth that lingers
So brief a space! Stiffly I twist my fingers,
Shuddering to stand. Again my crayon marks
Where now you quiver, cleaving my dungeon's darks.

Light! Fading—fading—ah, at last 'tis gone!
Only this twilight now, by which I read
My book of Heaven and Hell; and so am drawn
Up through the nine concentric heavens indeed
Into the Empyrean,—yet dashed no less
Through the nine circles of Hell's wretchedness.
Certes, th' abyss of wailing gripes on me
" Mute of all light, and bellowing like the sea."

Yea, Florentine! And mouthing shades are driven
Across my vision, where none their God may name.
Through inky air Francesca's form has striven,

Il Moro in Loches [CONTINUED]

Speaking thy words, streaming discolored
flame . . .
Thy words I traced here on the stone, slow, slow
In anguish: that " there is no greater woe
Than the remembering in misery
Of the glad time "—those words that stifle me!

For, ah! the face is not Ravenna's now.
'Tis Isabella, with eyes that burn and burn.
" Those injured souls! " Dante, you cry. You bow
Your face . . . Diavolo! I my face in turn
Bow in my shaking hands. *Aragonese,*
Begone! He sickened by natural disease.
My nephew was not murdered. . . . There were
things
Of state—alliances—and French kings!

She imputes poison. *Bice, do you hear?*
Her ghostly hands hold up a poisoned fruit.
In Pavia's castle grounds the leaves are sere.
The sun hangs red. . . . You guess what you
impute,
Sorceress? Come, recall your weeping parles
With that gap-mouthed and gargoyle-nosed King
Charles,
The drivelling idiot who mocked your pains
And sickened a spirit still so proudly Spain's!

Il Moro in Loches [CONTINUED]

"Murder, murder, most foul and secret murder,—
Evil most foul even for times most foul!"
Again? again? How often have I heard her
By day, by night, like some soft hooting owl
Circling my cell in unsubstantial flight
Through the long night, the ghastly, dreadful night?
Begone, I say! Gesù! As soft as lace
The death-owl's wings are fluttering in my face.

So! Bring malvasia! Wine—wine tonight!
Wine, and some woman's voice,—Cecilia's voice,—
Or my Lucrece, the ferrionera tight
Across her perfect brows, and there, for choice,
A yellow Orient pearl silkily glistening;
Half-pouted lips, as though her soul were listening
To some far music. . . . But the shadow falls,
As ever, around me from these mouldy walls!

Gloomy as galleries where the sentries standing
With flickering lanterns saw me wildly fly
That New Year's night, leaping from stair to landing
To Bice's tower-room. The leaden sky
Without snowed peacefully. In the great hall
Courtiers and harlots whirled in festival
To passionate music. But the page had said,
"Her Grace is dying!" I feared to find her dead.

Il Moro in Loches [CONTINUED]

All artful pomps that my Bramante wrought
With Leonardo,—shows and dazzling lights,
Feast and display,—flashed from my anguished thought.
Bice was dying! *Dio!* That night of nights;
The babe still-born; the monk with cross down-bending;
The weeping women; *"Vico, this is the ending. . . .*
Forgive me, Vico!" Bice, do thou forgive
Me! For thy words are poigniards while I live,—

Poigniards that turn and turn in the old wound.
Yea, I am tricked, sanctissima, and sold
To Satan, though God was with me as I swooned
Through the black days when first your corpse was cold.
Jennet and greyhound mourned you in those hours. . . .
And how my city of the hundred towers
Once welcomed in your gorgeous cavalcade,—
And all Milan, decked as for masquerade!

I met you with my knights. You shone with pearls.
Heralds made martial music on our ride. . . .
Brocades shake forth, the Viper flag unfurls,
At the Castello I lift you down—my bride!
And how you flew the falcon, tracked the fawn,
Wild elf-girl, rippling canzons to the dawn,

Il Moro in Loches [CONTINUED]

Or, through the heat, your gilded tresses dried
Atop your villa by the green water-side!

Ferrara's fairest—and both the sisters fair,
The crown and kingdom of Duke Hercules!
In aureate satin and checlatoun, how rare!
Yet, in mere tags and rags rare as in these!
Bice, you know I wed Cecilia then
To Bergamini. . . . Yea! But men are men.
" Merito e tempore "? Naught, naught, I know.
But I have suffered, and life would have it so.

I know all that they whisper, all they shout;
My brother Galeazzo's evil fame. . . .
Yet, turn to the Visconti, if you doubt
Others were worse than bore old Muzio's name!
Matteo the Ghibelline? Time makes him vague.
What of Gian Galeazzo, that the plague
Well ended,—Gian Maria, who, past all bounds,
Tortured dumb beasts, fed human flesh to hounds?

When my sire came, the Lombards blundered blind.
Filippo tricked them as he tricked my sire.
The Ambrosian Republic out of mind
Put Naples and Venice, when the people's fire
Later burned hottest. But the Sforza saw,
Fought for the leadership and formed the law!
Demos will always babble " Bought and sold! "
My brother was a match for Charles the Bold.

Il Moro in Loches [CONTINUED]

Cruelty? Aye! Then Simonetta came
With smooth conspiracies. What was the League?
We stood for Naples. Oh, you bicker "Shame!"
We matched intrigue with justified intrigue.
The Pazzi war? But I was Bari soon,
Playing to Bona a seductive tune
At the meet time. It oped the garden door.
So endeth Simonetta—shines the Moor!

We were the first Greek printers, and my court
Led art in Italy. The wild French claims
Answer the rest. Oh, intrigue of a sort!
One is not chary in a house in flames,
And such all Italy was then: the Pope
And Naples, and this one's plot and that one's
hope.
Bah! Was Trivulzio better? The people saw!
"Viva il Moro!"—for I gave them law!

Car'dossa, Bellincione,—match them then!
Ambrogio de Predis,—all the best,—
But Leonardo most, that man of men,
Though he complained I never gave him rest. . . .
I bend to Time and listen, and I hear
Such murmur as, through that Dionysius' ear
His craft contrived for me, the clamor grew
From far-off rooms. This clamor quickens too.

Il Moro in Loches [CONTINUED]

They shout him with one voice, his second sight,
His great "Cenacalo," his marvelous line,
Contours absorbed as in a mist of light,
Colors blent as by magic. . . . *He was mine!*
Made clockwork monsters, labyrinths,—or in turn
Lectured my sages past their power to learn,—
Wrought armament or masque beyond all prize,
Horsed my great father, limned Lucrezia's eyes!

Make hubbub, Time! . . . Ah, Schattenhalb, vile Swiss,
Again your fingers twist me round to see,—
Passing beneath the pike. You leer, "But this—
This is no priest. Bring shackles! This is *he!*"
La Tremouille smiled. So was Novara taken
Through Alpine traitors, and all my splendor shaken
About my ears. And now I rot and rot
In this vile tomb. They feign to know it not.

They are so suave, these French! And Borgia ramps
Abroad, and Florence raves as when that priest
I hated so stirred all to warring camps;
And here this Louis spills tournament and feast
About the land, betrothing his dear daughter.
Venice and Genoa, by either water,
Suffuse his eyes with tears of simple greed. . . .
And Maximilian still has time, indeed. . . .

Il Moro in Loches [CONTINUED]

Who was that gay Burgundian? Ah, Commines!
That was at Asti, when I met King Booby.
A sharp-eyed noble! Indeed the man had been
Months in this very fortress. What a ruby
Galeazzo gave him once at the Castello!
They say he has retired, the clever fellow,
To write his memoirs. As I hear it reckoned
Best wits agree he'll be Plutarch the Second.

Weariness! All my thoughts are weariness.
They bring me food? They serve me with such care!
Even allowed me friends in my distress
Once. Yet they've grown much stricter with fresh air
Of late. And so all that I have to do
Is arabesque these walls with *P* and *Q*
And pictures to drive Leonardo wild,—
Twist on my pallet, and babble like a child.

The Sforza blood in me is sapped indeed!
Was *this* the Moor—this once my arrogance?
See, my mouth dribbles. I quiver like a reed.
Indeed I think the oubliettes in France
Can cap Milan's. "The Condottiere laughs
And with his sword writes blood-red epitaphs!"
So once I trolled the soldier-song. . . . *Ah! Keys!*
Well, Messer Scowl, what viands, if you please?

NICCOLO IN EXILE

THE wineshop smells of grapes! Castruccio,
I thirst! Ah, and a salutation now
To thee, good miller! Ha, bland Ambrosio,
Thou golden butcher,—the heat hath marked thy brow
Red as thy beeves. News? By the Blood, I vow
'Tis not ' good day,' but ill, for not a springe
Within my little wood, beneath the bough,
Hath caught one wren. Crops? By an old wound's twinge
I think 'twill rain. The cards! Aye! Pour the wine!
Faugh, but the pack is greasy,—yet 'twill serve!
(So I forget his face, Duke Valentine,
And slacken fortune's fardels, nerve by nerve,
From off my mind. . . . I'll let the sunset shine
Full in their eyes, my fingers swift to swerve.)

He cheats! Yea, I cry cheat! I saw that one!
Nay, peace, Ambrosio, with that doughty roar,—
Merely, next time, eschew the crudely done!
Have I not been Borgian ambassador?
Peace! Let me tell how Heliogabalus swore
Once on a time. . . . Nay, seat thee; hark the humor!

Niccolo in Exile [CONTINUED]

Chutt, miller, what's a small coin less or more?
As for the old Etolians, they rumor. . . .
Rare drollery, eh? I'faith, a few days since
That quaint folk-custom gat an illustration:
My swineherd's wife. . . . (New chapter: How
a Prince
Should cater to the Vile for reputation!
Yea, murderer of Ursini and Vitelli,
Borgia, still might'st thou learn of Machiavelli!)

So, at this last, good-night! Nay, I must home.
Good-night!
What misty moonlight! There's the spark
Of fitful fireflies. Fields are not like Rome
Where steel strikes glittering out from alleys dark,
Sunlight discovering the white and stark
Body of grief. No, fields are friendly faring
For velvet Secretaries. Far watch-dogs bark,
But flower-scents rise, and I enjoy my airing.
So to the ancients home, and home to thee,
Soft Marietta! That man all falls above
Is set who hath for his indemnity
Against fate's ravage, two treasures, books and love.
That butcher can't play cricca. I fleeced him then.
As for the stratagems of those oven-men—!

RENEGADE

Il Quattrocento

With rumbling cannon, rippling pennon and halberts bright in the sun
On war's way—god Mars' way
The clamorous armies roam.
Hot destriers shake their manes and ramp at rumor of siege begun
And high carracque and galleasse swing towering through the foam.
Venice is out with all her fleets, the Borgia's never slept in sheets
This long while, this wrong while, this black and villainous tide,—
But drunk with wine of June today from all Romagna I'm away.
Up, up through oak and ilex grove to lose the world I ride.

Put faith in your miséricorde, in parchment, rack or rope
Or wind your horn beyond the Alps to march against the Pope,—

Renegade [CONTINUED]

God of the sun, who made the moon drip golden
honey such nights in June,
What dark hearts, these stark hearts,—how lost,
how lost to hope!

They're staggering, brawling through their camps.
Their torches splash the stones
With red gleams, with dread gleams
Where blood pools deep the mire.
Their captains bellow bawdy songs to drown the
dying's groans
And every southern vineyard glints an evil bivouac
fire.
Yea, Sforza, dream you hold Milan—Este, Ferrara,—if he can;
Let every tyrant sweat and curse and plot and
fume and rage;
Far, far above you toward the moon my gelding
climbs this night in June
To find and pluck the golden rose, to clasp an
heritage!

O joy that never your whole endeavor of plots and
wars could win!
For soft—there—aloft there, through glimmer of
falling bloom—
A light that shines through tangled vines, a star
the dusk within,
The porch of even, the door to Heaven,—a shepherd's wattled room;

Renegade [CONTINUED]

A face for memories, soft dark hair, bright eyes
to heal the heart!
(O roar your victories, boast your pomps and
grasp your golden prize!)
Here—moonlight lies along the floor. O love, and
here thou art,
Sacred and ghostly in the gloom as summer's slow
moonrise!

This still night, this strange night, its mystery so
deep
That far away the chaos fades, the summoning
drums are gone
As still I lie, and only hear her breathing in her
sleep
While high in heaven the silent stars shine on—
shine on—shine on. . . .

BOURBON'S LOVE

At Monza is the Iron Crown
That tempted France to Lombardy,
And Valentina of Milan-town
Nestled among the fleur-de-lis
The crested Viper; and the wine
Of lore and art in Italy
Lured on the line called Angevine
Between Vesuvius and the sea.

Louis the Spider held aloof
From the new sorceress of the south;
But wittold Charles would put to proof
His claim, and Naples kissed his mouth
A bitter kiss, a rueful kiss,
Whence the twelfth Louis gat no bliss
Since the Great Captain scourged him thence
And Ferdinand dropped all pretense.

The King of England took to wife
An aunt of Charles the Emperor
New-risen in a world of strife
With kingdoms than all kingdoms more
From Flanders unto far Peru,

Bourbon's Love [CONTINUED]

With Spain and Germany thereto.
The Great Child took the throne of France
And there was bloody work to do.

Montpensier was the greatest lord
Of all his realm. Saint Louis' blood
Ran in his veins. The folk adored
The Lord of Bourbon. He withstood
For France and Francis many a foe.
Louise of Savoy brought him low,
At last, to sequestrate his lands,—
A jilted harlot, frenzied so.

Her "Cæsar" wore the crown at last.
She served him, with her Marguerite.
The bitter strife with Anne was past.
She left an empire at his feet
Since Marignano shot the skies
With blazing portent, gaudy dyes.
Mother and son were made of lies
And Bourbon met them as was meet.

This only tells what surmise tells
Of a most desperate soul,
Since beneath courtly-gilded shells
Most furious oceans roll,
And all stands not on history's page.
For men are molded by their age
But lose their loves and gnash and rage
Withdrawn from out the whole.

Bourbon's Love [CONTINUED]

"You shall be false and I be true,"
The Marguerite of Marguerites
Sighed to great Bourbon in a dream
As his war-steed forded a stream
In Italy, and drowsy grew
His brain, with marches and retreats.
"And yet—such dark and tangled thread
Love weaves to gold, through dearth and dread!"

Fate clasped—then struck their hands apart.
To Francis, king of lechery,
His royal sister's loyal heart
Clove, despite lies and treachery.
But Bourbon's pride could not abide
At last his grim mischance.
His sword was thrust in Bayard's side,
As it was fated to betide,
When his sword turned on France,

Yet he turned sword against his lord
And fought for Charles of Spain.
His destrier's back became his home.
(A second Alaric at Rome
You read his hated name
In history!) But do you see
Her face that left him never:
The Valois' Pearl, the star of France,
Whose wondrous pilgrims to Senance
Live on in prose forever?

Bourbon's Love [CONTINUED]

She, who could write with jeweled pen
The intrigue of her time,
The light and shade and colors all,
The languor and the festival,
The bloodshed and the grime,—
She, faithful to that swine of self,
Francis, men should have slain,—
Aye, even to standing to his lie,
The blackest one in history,—
Knew she not Bourbon's pain?

She saw the panache of his plumes,
The glitter of his greaves
And cuisses, 'gainst the paneled wall
Where truly stood no man at all;
Or through the arbor leaves,
Where only sun-motes danced in gold,
She saw his darkling eyes,
His heavy casque. He spurred his steed
Down a dark valley, equerried
By death in royal guise.

Meanwhile the Admiral Bonnivet,
Who would have brought her down,
Made leg at mirrors, flung his fling,—
He who lost Francis everything
Through gross, half-witted flattering
At siege of Pavia-town.

Bourbon's Love [CONTINUED]

But Bourbon spurred. She dreamed he heard
Her voice say, low and clear,
With thrilling trust in every word
She breathed against his ear:
" One thread throughout the dark design,—
One fiery thread—your love and mine! "

O love indeed—to throb and burn
In that most thwarted hour!
In proud Toledo or Madrid
I think it was not always hid,
While Francis lay in tower.
A glance, a handclasp, and the thought
Of Amboise and their youth
Come back—the glittering Loire below,
St. Hubert's chapel, all the glow
Of days when there was truth
Before the Regent asked her price—
She and Du Prat, her snake,
Who laid the rack, who turned the vise,
And watched the proud heart break!

Though Bourbon strode the Roman road
He fell in silvered mail,
In days of dark antiquity
'Fore walls of soft iniquity
He was not born to scale.
The weak Pope chattered in his tower;

Bourbon's Love [CONTINUED]

And history turns wroth
And brands the Condottiere's shame
And sets him side by side in fame
With Alaric the Goth!

But, as he stood within his tent
The night before the sack,
As his dark brows in anguish bent
On his accursed track
South and still south, and what it meant,
Borne by his starved wolf-pack,
Until great Rome in moonlight lay,
Whence none might turn them back,—

There as he stood, she seemed to stand
Just past the torches' light,
With darkness upon either hand
And nothing but the night.
" Transfiguring still the whole design,
One thread of gold—your love and mine!"

So the embattled halberdiers
Stirred where they bivouacked.
Across the camp the sleeping spears
Murmured if aught attacked.
A restless presage fanned the camp
At love's last ghostly call.
War-horses whinneyed all astamp.
Stars trembled over all.

Bourbon's Love [CONTINUED]

And Bourbon raised his arms and said,
"It is the end, my friend.
Ah, Marguerite, when I am dead,
I may have love to spend
Who here had only hate to wreak,
My dear, my only dear!
Press then your cheek against my cheek
And set your bosom here!"

Upon his brow a warm breath seemed,
Seemed arms about his neck.
His head bowed forward as he dreamed
Beyond all battle-wreck,
Past Marignano, Pavia, or any earthly victory,
Some strange unravelling of knots,
Of the world's plots and counterplots,
Hint of Time's valedictory;

For on his heart she seemed to rest
Where poor Suzanne had lain;
And there was peace within his breast
And peace within his brain. . . .

While Love stood singing at the loom,
Weaving forever dreams and doom!

THE TRIUMPHANT TUSCAN

To Frances Rose Benét.

DARK—all is dark and cold! No light is here
Save this the candle in my helmet gives,
The paper helmet of an old, old soldier
Who toiled at trench and earthwork on the heights
Of Florence . . . it was very long ago.
And now I chip and chisel through the dark,
This sputtering goat-fat taper on my head,
In a cold gloomy house of rats and spiders
Off Trajan's forum.
Almost two years back
The Council passed upon my wall design
To stop the infection from that filthy pit
Beneath the column, made when Paul the Third
Demolished round its base, and excavated
To the old forum's level. Of course they still
Do nothing. *And they dare to say that I*
Procrastinate over the dome of Peter's!

Ugh! The miasma's round me like a mist.

Night. The Campagna's ruined aqueducts
Shine in the moon; the Coliseum lies
Ghostly and white under the sky of March;
But there is stir in Rome. Young Giovanni

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

Comes to be Cardinal. This nepotismo
Flourishes still. I can hear them. "Palle!
Palle!"
The coaches and the horsemen and the crowds
That quiet a little now. I have not stirred
For the new pomp; I hear them in my mind.
How many times! Laborious life creeps on
Under the riot and the pageantry,
The war, the jubilation, and the waste.

Yet Night remembers Day, for Day knew how,
Affianced of the sunlight, tristfully
She came along the cloisters; or we paced
Among the piazza's soaring colonnades;
Or in the garden of San Silvestro sat
On a stone bench against an ivied wall
In shade of laurel bushes—Rome beneath.
She like her juniper, inviolate ever
In claustral peace from all encircling storms,—
With the white vision of the great church redeemed
Borne in her breast, and Pavia's sharp disaster
An old dulled pain! *Yes, a great general,*
Faithful till death—yet with no faith for her
Who could have raised him . . .
Ah, now my bitter heart
Like some strange heavy fruit submits itself
To the grinding pestle and colander of God
Whence, crushed, bled forth and strained, a thin
small wine

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

Of sacred numbers drips! I gird myself
For heron-patience unto the agony's end.
My Adorata, my sibyl from that isle
Of oleanders, Ischia in the sea,
Where once old Epomeo's mountain-height
Guarded your singing soul! You also bore
The weight of this interminable life,
Suffered, endured, and conquered at the last.

Yes, I am very old. I have known it all;
All!—the great edifice that seems in dreams
To rise divine out of the mind of man
Till its proportions shoulder back the sun,
The ideal grandeur. Ah, so to build, and be
Some conquering Brunelleschi of the soul's
Magnificent cathedral, domed and lanterned
With gold stolen from God! Yet, as she taught,
Comparing Love to an entablature
That we had pored on once amid the ruins:
(While I supplied her terms of architects!)
Passion's the cornice, nobility the frieze,
Humility the architrave whereon
All rests—a strong, erect humility . . .
So apse and aisle and nave of the soul's church
Must breathe that spirit, where the last is first.
Humility . . . how knaves misunderstand
The slandered term! I have raged my life awry
In art's own passionate humility.
But to whom among these little mouthing men,

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

These harassing insects of my everyday,
Needs must I yield? To Nanni? He who yearns
To be chief architect,—that fool who plots
So childishly against me? Three years back
The old Æmilian Bridge they snatched from me,
(Puling that kindly they would spare my age
The imposition—and my over-caution!)
Why, three years back, in the next inundation
It laughed at yokel Nanni's strengthening
And strewed his mock foundations on the flood.
Have men no minds? There were great spirits once.
Some I have seen—one, never seen, have known:
The man who hated tyranny, as I;
The true republican, as I have been;
The immortal spirit, as I—could never be.

As where high mountains form their watershed
Disparting equally the rains of heaven,
So Dante's spirit soared, and so baptized
His friends or enemies with lucific song
Pouring from the steep summit of his soul.

But me they shackled to a sepulcher
All my life long,—Popes, pesterers, Cardinals,
Dukes of Urbino!
Forty statues planned,
As many basso-relievos to be cast
In bronze, and four façades—a mausoleum
Truly heroic. For my reproach eternal

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

Sits Moses in Saint Peter's of the Chains.
What though Mantova cried, "Why, this alone
Does superb honor to his memory!"
When the thrice-changed contracts dwindled to the last;
Six statues down to three; when Raffaello
Of Montelupo, for fifteen hundred ducats,
Had wrought his prophet, sibyl, and Madonna,—
And Maso, the Pope on the sarcophagus,—
And bad art crowned my single inspiration
Achieved through all the thwarting years' derision,—
I felt the heart within me sink like stone,
Though the chapel waited my great Judgment, and
"Now," they cried, "you are free!"

They say the Jews
In Rome have flocked to look upon their leader,
Speechless with adoration, praising me. . . .
Though evil rumors insinuate themselves
Through chinks in my mind's armor, such as one
That leers "Why, 'tis the Ludovisi satyr
Transferred to marble!"

But, Dio mio! who heeds
Thorn-crackling such as that? Let them go to
And bask in Il Perugino's cow-like masks,
Who mistaught Raphael; nay, 'tis the same
Old threadbare charge I know not fair proportions,
Grace as they understand it! *They* know not

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

That life is agony. "Too much anatomy!"
Yes; Yes indeed; Verily; only I groan
To think upon such grandeur as I planned
Eked out with gimcracks. Free? I turned away
From final contemplation of the Moses
Drowned in despair.

A lifetime's span ago
I climbed a spur of Etruscan Apennine
Above Carrara, where we worked the quarries
Like mad eight months for marble . . . fifteen
years
Ere Leo drove me from the Carrarese
To Pietrasanta, and the angered servants
Of Marquis Massa, and the mariners,
Blocked all my ships from Genoa to Pisa,
Forced me to turn road-builder in the end
And bridge the swampy plains with driven piles—
Whence I fell ill at Seravezza there,
The Arno shrank and dried, my columns broke,
Consigned to Florence; and how I cursed the Tomb,
Always that gray colossal incubus! . . .
But my mind wanders. I was thinking of
My thirtieth year, that day I stood and gazed
From the mountains above Carrara across the blue
Ligurian Sea. Far down below me wound
A road, with silly miniature white oxen
Hauling their load. The whip-crack of their driver
And his voluble voice were little diminished sounds

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

Through the still noon. The puffy drifting cloud
Moving along the road seemed hardly more
Than that hidden dust I filliped from my palm
The day I feigned to pare my David's nose
For Soderini.

Blue sky—the sea below!
I stood and thought, what sea-mark might not rise
Immaculate on this mountain? Thus, or thus
Disposed,—why not some glorious Pieta
Eluding schoolmen's definitions? Yes,
The mountain-mother, Nature,—in her lap
The tortured limbs relaxed of breathing Life
Exempt at last from the long agony,
Quieted by this vast mysterious sky
That broods forever over us, and should lend
Its elemental purity and pity
To her deep immortal gaze. I felt the stone
Already flaking from my flying chisel
Seized by a spirit stronger than my own,
As in the days when I despised clay models
And flung myself against some massive block
With fury—what they call my "terribleness."
The Voice of the seaward scarp, I saw it grow
Forth from the stone, an immemorial
Astonishment to all the future's ships
Whose sailors, stricken dumb, should drop the rope,
Forget the sail, and stare, and bow their heads,
Aye, bend their knees—adrift in waking trance!

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

The moment passed. I shambled down the mountain
Moaning, "Oh, for the eyes of Uriel
To see how all these leaguering ambitions
Of the heart my triumph!" Once more the moment passed.

Why, visions—and I have seen them—such as that
Which took me in the garden of my house
In the first year of Leo's rule, one Autumn:
The marvelous three-rayed meteor that I drew
With pen and colors,—one ray turned east and one
O'er Rome, and one toward Florence,—visions, I think,
Are no more strange (though less accountable)
Than these inward dreams that grow and fill the mind
Belittling life to a small mire for flies,
Not men, to buzz about! As proud—such dreams—
As, for one instance, that glorious second sight
Investing the bargaining Bernadone's son,
Saint Francis, when he raised his eyes and saw
A crucified seraph in the Apennine.
Can one not image the feebly thundering wings,
The iridescent glory, the wild heaven-grief,
The torsions of those torn celestial limbs,
The grandeur glowing through such clouds of pain!

But, Father, you wished a sound wool-stapling son,

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

No "mere stone-mason"! . . . So, there's
Lorenzo's garden
And the mask of that old faun whose teeth I
pulled . . .
Five ducats a month, a violet-colored mantle,
My father's customs-office,—Girolamo
Thundering from the pulpit of Duomo,—
The Brancacci chapel, and my broken nose!
Helter-skelter, out tumble the memories,—
All heaped as offerings to Masaccio . . . ah,
And there again—our great Poliziano,
With his beaked nose, full eye, and scintillant mind,
Who heartened me (with talk of Thessaly
And how Peirithous and the Lapiths fought
The galloping Centaurs all a summer night)
To work my first relief! He laughed indeed
On being able to discover only
One centaur—dead—in all the striving throng.

I wonder, could Lorenzo see me now,
Would the poetic despot set his hand,
As once, upon my shoulder, and with converse
Of art show me from out his cabinets
Some strange fifth century carnelian scarab
Græco-Phœnician, or a Grecian seal
Presenting the quadriga? I well recall
One signet of exceptional intaglio:
'Twas Heracles and the Nemean lion,
Cufic calligraphy on gray sardonyx. . . .

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

Such music and tourneys, as if all life were spring,—
Such feasts, such trysts, such jovial wicked wit,
Withal such learning and culture: jongleurs singing
The triumphs of love, and, in some high cool chamber,
Pico, our Phœnix, arguing Arabic
Or the haughty Chancellor explaining style! . . .
With all the great I sat at board in hall,
Philologists, translators, poets, scholars.
Most clear I see one exquisite spring evening.
The sky was heliotrope and softest saffron.
We were met in Pico's villa, on the slope
Of Fiesole,—orange, olive, and vine
Around us. Far beneath, the red-tiled roofs
And domes of Florence,—beyond it, Arno's meadows.
Many were gathered. One was the Greek savant
Demetrius Chalcondylas; another Linacre
The English doctor. Everyone reclined
'Mid wax-lights winking under the spreading trees.
Poliziano sang a gay ballata—
One of his own, set to a mandoline.
Lorenzo presided in an arrassed chair.
Goblets of wine, chestnuts, and sugar-tarts,
Almonds and other sweetmeats passed about.
Ficino, the enthusiast, swam in words,
Some near to heresy, as he expounded

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

The Infinite First Cause,—most bravely striving
To reconcile his Plato with Saint Paul
To the youthful Pico, marvelously wise,
Whose forehead leant on one delicate pale hand,
His brown hair falling low, his gray eyes stern. . . .
Soft from the pine-clad, heather-honeyed hills,
Girdling our City of Flowers, floated the sound
Of faint far music; stately overhead
Swam forth the white processional of the stars.

Aye, once again beneath the palace walls
The masquers revel, girls dance the carola;
Or through the market-place I stroll, and pause
To watch some smiling contadina pass
Basket on arm, whose firm-set elbow cocked
Suggests a hard bit of foreshortening.
The night comes cool after the stifling heat
Of summer day—asimmer with the plague
That took its toll so often. In the broad square
Patterned with moonlight, burgher story-tellers
Chuckle and quip. . . . Nay! There's the tramp of horse
In sunlight; the Magnifico returns
From bowered Careggi with his retinue. . . .

Ah, Florence, Florence! And once, as *I* returned
From San Miniato where our falconets
Held off the siege, I marked upon the roof

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

Of Santa Croce, musicians seated playing,
And, on the piazza, two squads of whites and greens
Battling at calcio for the football goal.
Thus light you held disaster, thus you lifted
A laughing face to doom, insurgent people,—
As Niccolo named you, "vain and childish still!"
Yet with nobility and fortitude
His sad embittered nature might not see.
But blunderers, blunderers! For the Apennine gorges
Had you sent forth but a few thousand men
Instead of lavishing such craven gold
You had turned Bourbon back—who knows?—and saved
The sack of Rome and your own ravishment.
True that France paltered, true that Venice quaked,
Francesco Maria snapped like a broken reed
And Clement swayed to every gust that blew;
The muddle around Milan seemed worse than fate;
Yet, Florence, thou "most beauteous daughter of Rome"
As Dante hailed thee,—Florence, Cæsar's camp,
Where was thy strong hand to save Italy
That hour? Did thy banner not bear the badge
Of a great free people—not a ship of fools?
Too late! The viper Baglioni lurked
Warm in your bosom. Again I hear the shout

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

" Viva Gesú Cristo, nostro Re!"
Leafy San Miniato gay with villas
Felt axe and hatchet fall. Upon the tower
I placed my wool-bales. With a moody mind
I carved that wingèd Victory for our camp—
Demolished by the victors . . . all too late!

Rash hope of France—the great betrayal—soon
Overthrow, rapine, sack,—and Florence dead.
There stand the figures in the sacristy
Of San Lorenzo, showing forth my mind.
Who cared for the younger Medici? I carved
Florence the warrior, gazing on her ruin;
Florence the young and somewhat specious knight
Of times of peace, luxurious and weak.
There Day and Night, Twilight and Dawn display
My various resignation or despair
For her. I hid my grief. I came to Rome,
Never to look upon my Florence more.

Was that a knock? This cramp gets in my legs
And I can't move. The dogskin hose beneath
My stockings, and these cordovan leather boots,
Don't aid my sudden shifting either. *So!*
Now another candle. *Hola! I am coming!*

You, Giorgio? *Giorgio, Giorgio, is it you!*
A thousand welcomes, friend! Come in! Come in!
That is good feltro you are clad in, friend;

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

The weather still is sharp, though hardly yet
The time for malaria from the Pontine marshes.
Still, it is not the clean air of Casentino—
Especially—but I see you in the flesh!
And so you brought the Cardinal to Rome?
Ah, what a jewel in your velvet cap
That is—no, that I meant, secures your feather.
Such a cape and tabard—and what riding-boots
Spacious and spurred! Why yes, of course you came
Just as you are—to see the old man, eh?
Sit down! How did you manage to give the slip?
May I put up your horse? He can munch straw
Beside my chestnut pony. On foot, you say?
Again, sit down! This armchair by the fireplace.
That? Oh, stupidity, I've dropped the candle.
That's my Pieta—no-o, 'tis not yet finished.
You saw it before. *'Tonio!* Where's the man?
Ah, Giorgio, now my rare Urbino's gone . . .
His wife Cornelia loved him not as I . . .
His death and my brother Sigismondo's death . . .!
But this is scurvy talk. Come, take some wine?
Somewhere I've wine from Florence—trebbiano.
(Even better than water from the Trevi fountain!)
Cheese? Figs? That orcio of olive oil
Might freshen us a salad. Say you? No,
You've dined. Well then, tell me the gossip now.
Your journey? Did your sumpter-mules kick loose,

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

Your guards fall into drinking? What's the account?
Get on with it—Lorenzo's madrigal
Had it, you know, that youth is sweet, but flies.
Speak, or my youth will leave me all too soon,
I fear,—this garrulous second youth of mine!
I was thinking of these later Medici;
At least that bastard mulatto . . . *Me perdone, Giorgio!* One forgets. But Cosmo seems
Better. Ah, all those letters that you wrote me,
And he . . . I feel the honor sensibly,
Yet, as I answered, I must not give up
Seventeen years hard labor, while the breath
Is in my body—to see it hacked apart
By fools. When it is finished, it is finished.
Then let them raze it. I'll be safely dead.

What's that you say? Such a triumph? My catarrh
Affects my hearing slightly. Wild rejoicing
Along your journey? Ah, but did they truly?
With olive garlands on their heads, white robes,
And branches in their hands . . . a banquet too!
Yes, I have eaten prugnoli, and the wine
Of Monte Alcino is good. You live on plush,
My Giorgio, these days. I am glad the Duke
Has such a devoted servant.

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

So-o? Now this
Must be the kernel of the nut. You say—?
I know—Girolamo's olden Council Hall.
The Duke greatly desires my own opinion?
Well, we'll exchange our models, Giorgio mio.
Tomorrow—come in the forenoon—we will ride
To Saint Peter's, and you shall see the wooden one
That my divine, celestial Cavaliere
Has at last prevailed upon my laziness
To finish, and ease, says he, my aching head.
Though there's an outline of the dome I drew
Upon the marble floor of Saint Paul's—but that
I fear is not so orderly! Now see,
For example, here's the cartoon showing the plan,
The Greek Cross. I eked it out with various sheets
Pasted together. Do you like it, eh?
But, for tomorrow, we'll see that great antique
The Belvedere torso. They say there's a Hercules
By Lysippus, that he made for Alexander
To carry upon the march,—a table figure
The posture's worked from.

Ah, now I blush! You make
Too much of me in your most excellent book.
" In contempt of envy, in despite of death . . ."
Tragically I sit for hours and try
To sprout the wings to match; I, who they say
Derive all anatomy from Pollaiuolo,
All vigor from Signorelli. We-el, 'tis true

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

I do commend the latter's compositions.
Something from Orvieto's in the Judgment,
Have you noticed?
But let me bow to you in turn
And thank you deeply for your thoughts of me
In these last years,—sending Bartoli's book
That "Defence of Dante,"—that was when I fled
From Rome to the mountains, from the Spanish troops.
Those autumn weeks in oak and olive wood
Verily saved my life; and I can say
For once at least in my harassed career
My solitude brought peace, and faith again.
The sacrilege and simony of old Rome
Passed, and the wars passed, and the blood of Christ
Sold with both hands; the splendor and the shame.
The world dropped from my back for that short space.
But you can understand. You have often spoken
Of your Camaldoli among the firs,
Among the mountains, where you healed your heart
After Alessandro's murder,—among the snows
Where gentle rivulets threaded from cell to cell
Of that high Hermitage. I am recluse too.

How is the gentle wife? I joyed to hear
You were rewarded for your ruined farms
In the valley of Chiana. Oh these wars!

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

For my part I declare I hate all men
Who would begin with evil,—that is, murder,
To bring forth good. It is a great presumption
To dare kill anyone. The man who said,
"I am no statesman, but an honest man."
Spoke truth indeed.

What store is in your book
Of artists. And I have upon my conscience
That tilt with Leonardo. Yes, I said
Rude things to Leonardo, and I thought him
Utterly insincere. But, as for casting
His Sforza—what is casting, after all.
My Julius made a better cannon so!
And yet I well remember it was Francia
Praised the Bologna statue, as it was,
For the casting most. And how that angered me!
Francia was suave like all his suave Madonnas,
Too smooth enameled.

Yes, I have had my wrongs,
The Sangallists, and Bramante—though you state
The case too strongly there—and now this oaf,
This bungler, Nanni! But let us speak of other
More lively things. . . .

You must go? Ah, not so soon!
Well then, tomorrow. Giorgio mio, I thank
Your immediate devotion and courtesy
For this kind visit—thus—on both your cheeks.

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

So you found the old fellow—eh? There's a step
down.
You slide the bolt. Good night! Good night!

And now
Something to draw with. Here is the design:
A graybeard—in a go-cart—with his hourglass.
Anchora Imparo on the scroll above.
Excellent truly. Such a one am I.
I learn even in decay.

Ah yes, Bramante
Did wish to ruin me—for Raphael's sake
We'll say—and certainly I never told him
I was so singly sculptor as to be
Unable to paint any foreshortened figure
Upon a vault. . . . Yet that was toil indeed!
The length of wet fine plaster, the cartoon
Stretched on the surface, and the outlines traced,
Muscles and draperies dashed in with the stylus,
Till my head twisted like the wool-guild's lamb,
My breast clove to my backbone, dropping plaster
Bedaubed my face as though I wore a mask.
And then the surface took a mist, and then
That rascal, Julius, tried my twanging nerves
With silly directions from his post below
Till I was fain to wrench out scaffold planks
And hurl them on his stubborn head.

I see him
Standing as on that April day he laid

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

The new Saint Peter's firm foundation-stone,
Shouting the crowd back from the pier's deep pit,
Sprinkling the marble with a benediction—
The stone that held the vase deposited
And filled with coins and medals . . . I can see
His armor flashing as he reviewed the troops
Another time—or watch him as he plays
At tric-trac, wholly easeful, or again
Sight him against a marble balustrade
'Mid trellised roses, with his snowy beard
Pouring upon his crimson mantle, smiling
On two court lovers in a loggia. Ah,
He was a man! He quelled the whole Romagna,
Panted for time toward more great purposes,—
And slave-drove Art—yet always with intention
Beyond the dull ambitions of the great.
Leo was waste, Clement was vacillation,
Julius was power,—Julius was power indeed!

The man of action, how he dwarfs the artist!
Though many a doffed beretta has done me honor
And Francis and the Sultan fawned on me,
Faugh for the artist's life!
I know I lie.
For this is sure among all things unsure:
That he who holds, through good or evil hap,
The hegemony of his soul's own city,
Disfranchising all lusts and vanities,
Has more than all the kingdoms of the earth,

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

Is more than that poor Prince of Niccolo's,—
His brilliant, impossible, calculating—monster . . .

And so, as ever, Vittoria returns
To stateliest music through my memory.
Monte Cavallo, be thou blessed hence,
Though at thy foot they say red Nero stood
To watch the flame-filled cloud of burning
Rome!
For there my love would build a nunnery.
I promised her designs. . . .

My drawings pleased her; the Pieta most.
On the last day she said that I should stand
At the Lord's right hand in heaven. Ah, her heaven,
"Magnificent Messer Michelangelo,"—
From which distilled such cooling dews upon
Your eternal misery of procrastination,—
What heaven for you?
Heaven—heaven in those hours!

Her pamphlet on "The Passion of the Redeemer"
Rests—here; the same the Inquisition searched for.
This folio of her sonnets. . . . God's spark!
God's spark!
Hands off, Bembo, thou polished humanist,
They need not thine august imprimatur!
She saw a flaming sign in Juan Valdez
Who thundered at the Curia's corruption,—
Wrote many poems in the Valdensian spirit,—

The Triumphant Tuscan [CONTINUED]

Loved the Capuchins, hated evil things,
Took pity on poor Renée. . . .
Thanks to God
She sleeps, while cruel beasts hunt down the just.
This church they see is not the church she saw
Nor ever could be!
Oftentimes she came
From Santa Caterina into Rome,
And died within the convent of Sant' Anna.
And died within the convent—here at Rome. . . .
Now in that mystical convent of white stoles
With Beatrice, where the yellowing Rose
In sempiternal fragrance rays its light;
And light in the form of a river gloweth there
With ineffable effulgence . . . every side
Living sparks like ruby and like topaz shine
Among the flowers . . . "Light is thereabove
Which makes the Creator visible to that creature
Which has its peace only in seeing Him . . . !"

So-o! So-o! Well, Messer Cock, don't split your throat
Shrilling of dawn without! The gray mists seep
Through door and window. How my candle pales!
'Tis time to stumble to my iron bed
Up obdurate stairs, up past the Death I painted
That with his coffin looms confronting me. . . .

"Rend thou the veil, Dear Lord! Break thou the wall!"

MICHELANGELO IN THE FISH-MARKET

Here's color for my monsters! Verily,
This is no Arno-spawn,—far greater game!
These shimmering, gleaming, flashing forms first
came
To sunlight in the great Ægean Sea.
Ye sacred symbols! They have whispered me
Your Greek style bears the initials of His name
And titles, where lies hidden in the same
The Sibyl of Erythra's prophecy!

Howbeit, Messer Domenico, you
Shall gape to see my drawing when I'm through. . .
What dawn-pulsed gills, what splendor on each
scale!
This mullet's bottle-green, with silver under,—
That weird, dark-flecked murena. . . . Well, no
wonder
I shall net Popes when soon I spread my sail!

BAST

She had green eyes, that excellent seer,
And little peaks to either ear.
She sat there, and I sat here.

She spoke of Egypt, and a white
Temple, against enormous night.

She smiled with clicking teeth and said
That the dead were never dead;

Said old emperors hung like bats
In barns at night, or ran like rats—
But empresses came back as cats!

THE SUN GAZER

The zenith age was past of earthly spoil
For Egypt. Amonhotep's and Thothmes'
Scythed chariots swept Syria. For their foil
Strange Akhenaten 'twas succeeded these
With single worship, where the shrewmouse even
Was sacred to some god of Egypt's heaven.

When kings were likened both to bulls and lions,
Forth in simplicity came this one king,
Foreshadowing Israel's belief and Zion's,
With only words of love and peace to bring
An age of banditry and ravening lust,—
He the vain dreamer, the gentle and the just.

For there, in the far dark of history,
He saw one God above all gods endure
In the sun of heaven, one strange sublimity,
Source of all living things, one cause and cure,—
Nor mere effulgence and material heat,
But an all-being, that caused the heart to beat.

The fine green scarabs of his father's reign
Bear graved accounts of festival, oblation,
And ceremony. These the son thought were vain
Unless to Aten, Lord of all Creation,

The Sun Gazer [CONTINUED]

Whose gross, deceitful shade was Amon-Ra.
" Adoring with their wings thy sacred ka,

" The birds fly in their haunts; the fishes be
Dazed with the bright profusion of thy beams
Even in the deeps of the green-glimmering sea!"
He sings; and when he died, slain by his dreams,
The plotting priesthood triumphed with their guile
And left his name no trace, and called him vile.

But beneath crescent cliffs there lay a bay
And a small island, where Akhenaten made
A city for the chosen of his day,
Where all should love and no man be afraid
And the many-handed beams touch all, and bless
All equally, and wither wretchedness.

" The Aten my father 'twas who brought me here,
The City of the Horizon this shall be.
O rampart of a million cubits sheer,
Remembrancer, thou, of eternity,—
O thou whom no artificer hath known,
Aid me to build! I see in thee alone!"

He raised his temples, shadows-of-the-sun.
" Words of the priests," he said, " more evil they
Than those things King Nebmaara hath known done
Or Menkheperura heard!" So many a day

The Sun Gazer [CONTINUED]

They painted walls with lotus-flower buds,
Embossed the panels and set the golden studs,

Raised costly cedar covered all with gold,
Scored out the name of Amon from far cliffs
And graffti, made the courts fair to behold
With masts and chiseled scenes and hieroglyphs,—
But o'er each pylon, wall, and obelisk,
The true God flashed his symbol, the sun's disk.

Ah then the Theban triad paled and bowed,
And Khnemu doffed the twi-plumed atef crown,
And Nak, the demon-serpent of the cloud,
And the great judge, Osiris, all bowed down;
And Thoth, the ibis-headed giant turned
Wild eyes and gnashing beak, and Isis burned

With frustrate wrath. Along the haunted road
To the pyramids, along the lonely plain
From Heliopolis' nome, a concourse flowed,
Gods on the gods' high way, wailing in vain
To Harmachis, the sphinx. The burial-ground
Of ancient kings echoed and stirred around.

Processions of images and ghostly boats
And strange shapes striding with heads of cat and ram
Or jackal-jaws; eyes of each beast that gloats
Widened in panic of one who breathed "I am!"

The Sun Gazer [CONTINUED]

The snake of the northwind, the barque of Ra
Drove eastward toward the dark peninsula.

Nun, of primæval waters, led the van;
Horus, the falcon; Mentu, god of war;
Atmu, Anubis; roaring Sekhmet ran
From Memphis; like a golden cloud, Hathor,
With Hekt, frog-headed, the goddess of all birth
And Set, the spirit of evil on the earth.

The goat-faced potter of the cataract;
Hawk, ram, and man-faced sphinxes, all fled by
Like refugees from out a city sacked,
A wave of darkness under the dark sky,
A rout of star-mist that far shepherds soon
On lonely hills saw travelling past the moon

In rolling clouds tinged with weird bloody dye
And tossed in monstrous shapes. They seemed to hear
Lowings and hissings and wilder sounds on high,
And darkness fell upon them, and great fear,
And their sheep huddled as at the khamsin's blast
As out of Egypt the gods of Egypt passed.

So Akhenaten triumphed—a little space;
But priest and warrior stood against his light.
He sickened, died at last in the disgrace
Of all—for Sephel, king of the Hittite,

The Sun Gazer [CONTINUED]

Smote the Canaan and conquered as with fire.
Ribaddi stood, and Abimilech of Tyre;

Ribaddi, king of Byblos, keeping faith
With Egypt, as did not faithless Aziru,
The Amorite. And rebels wrought great scaith,
Murder and plunder, and still the conquest grew.
"—And Tunip thy city weeps, her tears are falling!
For twenty years, oh king, we have been calling

The King, the King of Egypt, our great Sun . . .
Simyra is a bird into the snare . . .
But thou hast sent us not one word—not one!"
So wails their anguish in th' old character.
Deputies, officers brought curse and prayer,
Yet Akhenaten brooded in despair,

Still loving peace, still praying weariedly
To his one god that naught could quite abash.
"As long as the King's ships are on the sea
His strong arm held him Naharin and Kash,
But now the Khabiri sack the King's strong cities!
King, save thy land, this day of direful pities!"

Thus the cuneiform from Palestine
And all of Syria's empire holding leal.
Then night came down on Akhenaten's line.
The bitterest pang for any king to feel
Rended his heart. His people died the death,
And all that he could give seemed idle breath.

The Sun Gazer [CONTINUED]

The city of brightness gradually darkened
To a city of the grave, necropolis
Of even God. All night, wide-eyed, he hearkened
Curses and wailings from a black abyss
Of slaughtered lives,—he, who would put no trust
In spear or chariot or the loud dust

Of marching hoplites with their emblems flashing
O'er the lapped shields. His empire fell apart,
And Egypt's earthly might; and black waves, dashing
Their tear-floods, roared in caverns of his heart,
As some seamed warrior from the east, alone,
Stood with clenched fists, imploring, at the throne.

The captured cities near Orontes mouth,
The sea-coast cities, the provinces all torn,
Despoiled and rent, the vineyards of the south,
The ravaged pasturage and trampled corn,
The desperate defense, the falling wall,—
And still he prayed, "There is one God for all!"

Yes, he put by the sword, put by the sword,
And so lay dead. And Harmhab took his place,
That doughty captain whom all the folk adored,
Who wrought and fought and won back for his race
Gradual sway. Then Rameses held power
Soon, and their conquest knew a zenith hour

The Sun Gazer [CONTINUED]

Till, with his death, at length all fell apart,
And hordes from west and east, from south and north,
Made the land strengthless. So our musings start
On Akhenaten. Lonely he went forth,
Lonely he died, the zealot to the last,
Cast in a mould wherein no king was cast;

The man who saw his God so face to face
All else was shadow in that blinding light;
The man who willed salvation for his race
Through happiness at last before the night;
He who would build on love, and love alone,
The welfare of a kingdom and a throne.

His name they cut from all the monuments,
Heaped the opprobrium, raised their gods once more,
And passioned on after their own intents.
Again I see him tread the painted floor
Between the gilded columns, in the cool
Of some high lakeward-looking vestibule.

He murmurs, "Living in Truth!"—his title then.
"Living in Truth!" and "Aten, I behold!"
A pale, frail youth, whose body should have been
Lapped, like his mother's, in sheets of purest gold
Ere it was coffined,—for there a King stepped down,
Of old, to doff his crown—and take his crown.

THE QUEEN'S IDYLL

Kilimandjaro, Father of the Nile,
Smiled not on any fairer,
Nor Narmer, the old Scorpion, king of guile
In predynastic glory.
The diadems are two, the red and white,—
Of both she was the wearer,
Oasis apricot, the moon's delight!
'Tis of the Queen Hatshepsut that I write.
Hear the Queen's story!

Queen of Two Lands, by Lower Egypt crowned
With thronelike headdress high
And red, whereon was Upper Egypt's bound
Of linen stiff and white,—
Sister and wife of Thothmes, she appeared
Beneath the Hawk-god's sky
Wearing the collar and the small false beard
To seem full monarch-man. The bright asp reared
Golden from brows as bright.

From Buto in the Delta to Aswan
At the first cataract
"King of the North and South" her titles ran,
And east to Sinai's cliffs,—

The Queen's Idyll [CONTINUED]

Hailed "golden falcon of the solar blood"
Where e'er her camels tracked,—
Her father Amon named, who, in a flood
Of light and perfume o'er her mother stood,
As hymn the hieroglyphs.

Yet dreams, strange dreams perplexed the royal heart.
The Queen to Karnak fared
Where the superb propylons leaned apart
Masted with cedars tall
And brilliant pennants. She entered from the light,
Heart-throbbing that she dared,
And stood 'mid soaring pillars beneath the bright
Enameled semblance blue of gilt-starred night
In the hypostylic hall.

Beyond, in monolithic shrine, the god
Held seat and sacred ark.
Around him, sculptured courts, where e'er one trod.
With battle-scene and myth
The walls were colored. Palmed priests approached the king
Bearing the holy barque
Of Amon, lord of thrones. Their rites they sing.
"*Souton di hotpou!*" She renders offering,
Invoking signs therewith.

The Queen's Idyll [CONTINUED]

"We love, O Father Amon, Lord of Thebes
And guardian of Karnak!
As silver dourah sprouts from darkest glebes
Our heart shows forth its love.
Then, as thou lovest the king, pray counsel Us
To find what now We lack,—
From the great Double House that 'mures Us thus
How to adventure some voyage perilous
We scarce feel worthy of!"

The god bespeaks the priests who understand,
While sistrums softly thrill:
"The ladders of incense in the secret land
With mystery tease my rest.
Plant these, to deck my house! When night appears
Then seek there what I will,—
I, Amon thy Father, lord of hopes and fears;
Through my strong genii of the myriad years
And those of east and west!"

Sibylline utterance ceased. She bowed her head.
Copper-clasped leopard-skin
Swung on her shoulder. The linen headdress spread
Striped folds upon her breast.
She turned—from apron to her ribboned queue
Kingly, and next of kin

The Queen's Idyll [CONTINUED]

To gods. She trod the whispering pave, and through
Huge doorways to her waiting retinue
And home through heat to rest.

Senmut, with his knobbed stick of cherrywood
And black curled wig, in broidered linen gowned,
Obeised before the high-plumed Queen, and stood
Under her gleaming throne whose sides were bound
With lotus and papyrus. "Thy temple walls
Are finished, Majesty. The hot South calls.

"And at command we seek the Balsam-land,
Put now to sea for Pount, where Thou hast heard
Of fabulous treasure, jewel-dazzled sand,
Numberless herds, and many a gorgeous bird.
We bring you back the incense-trees you seek!"
The Queen's lids lowered. She thrilled to hear him speak.

The golden graven collar she had given
To this her architect flashed on her eyes
Collyrium-lengthened each to a dark heaven
For his deep gaze. She leaned. He heard her sighs.
"Instruct my captains," he heard her softly say,
"And swiftly sail,—oh, swiftly sail away!"

The Queen's Idyll [CONTINUED]

Each cabin is a very stately house
With pillared doors. The painted flag-ship gleams
From lotus-flower stern to golden bows
With green and yellow. The sail is cloth of dreams
Spread on a wide yard double the high mast's
height,
And thirty rowers dip in tides of light.

The boardings are like chapels. Prow and stern
Bear Harmachis, the Ibex, and the Cow.
Brave-striped and diapered awnings, fans that burn
With peacock eyes, shadow the deck. And now
The captain lifts his wand. The green and red
Chequered, embroidered, tasseled sail is spread.

And toward far Pount the graceful ships are gone
For stranger freight than other Nile-craft quest
Through caravans of ointments, cinnamon
From Ind; or ships of Tarsus and the west
Lade with their precious woods, or argosies
Of Colchis, with their brass, bear down the breeze.

A month they loitered toward that wonderland,
Then saw the small coned huts and short-horned
cows
And point-beard, pigtailed people on the strand
As known to Chufu. For their necks and brows
Gay necklets had they brought, daggers and rings.
They set them out to barter with these things.

The Queen's Idyll [CONTINUED]

Then to these strangers from far Tamera drawn
The ruler's heart was warmed; and cups of gold
And birds of peacock plumage, snared at dawn,—
Paint for the eyes, pearls priceless to behold
(With apes dog-headed and monkeys with long tails!)
Crowded the decks 'mid casks and ropes and bales.

There was a cargo of rare khesit-wood
With powder of Ahem, kash and copper-ware,
Mountains of incense-resin purple-hued,
And hunting leopards, snarling with golden stare;
Gold stone and blue and green! The sailors sing,
"Never was like brought back to any king!"

All treasures of the Land of Pount, all balms
Of the Divine Land; thirty-one growing trees
For Amon-Ra! They left the cocoa-palms
And Parihu, the Prince, throned at his ease.
The suite of the great Queen's ambassador
Struck camp and left that white sea-whispering shore.

When the canal was reached, two years or more
Had passed at last. By the high granite quay
People from wharves and roofs watched them outpour
Their curious spoils. The Queen came down to See,

The Queen's Idyll [CONTINUED]

Borne in her naos, with emeralds of Sinai
Globed from brown ears, green uat on lid of eye,

Snake bracelets and a helm of blue with brass
Studs, and her skin made gold,—on all her limbs
The oil of Ani. So Senmut saw her pass,
Newly-returned. Along the quay she swims
Reclined on cushions of red and blue, fresh-bathed
And dressed, in silver tissues sashed and swathed.

The painted ships, giraffes and monkeys green,
Wild-bearded chiefs—all in the hot sunlight,
Black Nubians white-toothed, and, there between
The brick-hued sailors, and the wondrous height
Of trees and scented bales,—on these there smiled
A radiant Queen, enchanted as a child!

"The merchants from Javan, traders of Tyre,
Arabian horsemen with their cream-skinned mares,
Slavemen of Sais who have bound with wire
Slaves black as fish-spawn,—those who cry the wares
Of Persia or of Kedar,—verily,"
She cried with laughter, "now must envy me!"

But Senmut, seamed and sunburnt, stood apart
Watching—whene'er the crowd craned necks a space

The Queen's Idyll [CONTINUED]

To hark some foreign parrot—how there would
dart
A shadow of desolation o'er her face
And a strange query line her little brows.
So she rode back to the great Double House,

Sighing, " But where is he? " with troubled looks.
And then she called the temple scribe, to see
Number and measure entered in temple books.
Careful of count, and grave, was Te-hu-ti,
For the god Horus watched, and the just scales
Held Theban Amon's tribute in roped bales.

All afternoon the measurement went on,
The checking and the storing, on the quays
The din and dust. At last the trees were drawn
Up the long dromos to the terraces
Of the King's temple, from the Libyan beach.
But still Senmut came not and sent no speech.

And she, too proud to question, since he did
Her this discourtesy, who—hated not
Her architect,—paled lest his bones be hid
In some far desert grave, some ghastly spot
Of lean cadaverous lions. And then she said,
" My other envoy spoke—he is not dead—"

Yet bit her nails for doubt. Red evening came,
And swiftly was blue night. And many lights
Twinkled afar o'er Thebes. Now, since the flame
Of day was cooled, on the gay-awninged heights

The Queen's Idyll [CONTINUED]

Of flat white roofs the people took their ease,
Or under tamarisk or cedar trees

In their pooled gardens. But Hatshepsut made
Her favorite baris glide across the Nile.
At the river-steps her Nubian guard she bade
Halt and await her. And up the moonlit aisle
Of crouching sphinxes, her likeness in each face,
She moved, so small, yet with such state and grace.

Up past the first propylons, now alone
From terrace on to terrace. There the night
Showed shadows where the new myrrh-trees lay prone
Or stood to wait the coming of the light
When men should plant them. At last the colonnades
Of the portico, alternate lights and shades.

And therewithin to Amon she abased,
Bidding him take his own, the trees of myrrh,
Her gift and venture. Yet she prayed in haste
As swift to somewhat else. He answered her
Only by grave full silence. Forth she stepped—
Stood waiting. The dim stars burned. A fountain wept.

The Queen's Idyll [CONTINUED]

Then, gazing on her terraces full set
With "ladders of myrrh" under that holy gleam
Of trembling stars—yet with a wild regret—
Before her glimmering temple, "O barren dream
Of loveliness!" she sobbed.
Her lover came
Forth from the shadows. Senmut breathed her name.

Pressed close against his heart, "*Thy words to me, Amon, my Father!*" she murmured in amaze.
"So far I sought! Yet all I sought was—he!
And knew not!"
Thus the night's dim violet haze
Veils their embrace. Anon, a lingering breeze
Wafts dreamy fragrance from the incense trees.

THORSTAN'S FRIEND

To Laura

Now when we were come to that bright gleam of
waves
Frowned on by purple dusk, lit like a cave's
Dim gulph with fox-fire—too malicious lit
Before the thunder split
Heaven and earth with shattering peal on peal!—
Under the canopied dark all Thorstan's steel
Flashed as he leapt upright
And stood with folded arms affronting night.

The great prow dragon-headed
His right hand clutched, as though that clutch im-
bedded
The mane of some proud steed by prouder master
Praised fiercely for dominion of disaster.

He spoke. It was as when the gull-king cries.
He looked, and all his life stood in his eyes,
And mine stayed terrored on his furrowed face.

So we two, and the ship, in that strange place
Were glassed within the storm's green evil light.

Thorstan's Friend [CONTINUED]

Then Thorstan raised both arms up to their
height
And cried "Thor!" (hearing the thunder) and
cried "Thor!"
Dropped arms, and cried no more.
His beard like mistletoe lay on his breast.

There is one track that all our fates attest
And when we reach the end it is well known.

So Thorstan cried no more. He groaned no groan.
He raised his head again and took my hand.
"You who come after, may you understand!"
He gazed, mounting the bulwark. Flashing
spray
Blinded my eyes. I turned my head away.

Then the storm burst. The dark blew out the day.

At the long last I lay along the shore.
Pennons of chilly light whipped in the west.
My limbs were leaden and I longed for rest.

Vikings, you will not find him any more.
He knew, who had reached his end.
To save him—would a man not save his friend
Before his life? But this was other kind.
He knew. I knew his mind.

Thorstan's Friend [CONTINUED]

And if I live the sun again will rise,
And if I live the moon be in the skies,
A warm hand touch me and a dear face see!

With him the thing was other. Such as he
Desire no crown of our dull victories. They
Fling from their eyes the jeweled glittering spray
Of kingdoms and peer ever toward the west.

By such strange rending hunger dispossessed
Of steed, of store and stead, of wife and bairn,
Thorstan's gnarled body in some sandy cairn
Under the shifting tides lies turquoise-eyed.

But that, the ghost in Thorstan, doth not bide
By wet or dry or where we feel the air.
This heart within me knows it is not there.
(*My friend, my friend, my friend!*)
This heart says, crying, it is not the end.
Bringing no peace, it says—yet says and says;
For here—here was the parting of our ways.
I cannot know—but he? . . .
Broad lies the light along the level sea.

THE BALLAD OF TAILLEFER

To Elinor Wylie

On the judgment seat of Alfred,
Acclaimed by churl and thane,
Sat Harold the son of Godwin
With the sword of Athelstane,—
The Earl of the West Saxons,
With Edward in his mind,
Harold, Lord of Britain,
King of the English kind.

In Rouen fumed Duke William
And swore this should not be,
By the Mount of the Archangel,
By the saints of Normandy;
And Tostig, Harold's brother,
Northumbria's banished earl,
Spake with Harold Hardrada
And saw his fierce lip curl.

So the Norse returned to England
With fire and sword, and found
One gift from the golden Dragon—
Seven feet of English ground!

The Ballad of Taillefer [CONTINUED]

A shield wall by Gate Fulford,
Thick spears on a windy ridge,
The last of the ancient sea-kings
Routed at Stamfordbridge.

But below the Picard river
The south wind came at last
To the sails of all Duke William's ships.
His ships were sailing fast
North on the misty channel
When stars were glittering,
And under the Mora's lantern
One knight sang to the king.

Taillefer, Cleaver of Iron,
Bearing a name for the strong,—
Yet Taillefer, youth of laughter,
Thrilling the night with a song
Of Charlemagne and Roland,
Of a horn that mocked despair,
With a voice of youth and victory—
Taillefer! Taillefer!

Brooding the Conqueror watched him
And his rapt uplifted face,
Light of the eyes that challenged,
Freedom and strength and grace,
Merry, untouched by evil,
Open and frank and kind;

The Ballad of Taillefer [CONTINUED]

And a serpent stirred in the darkness
That filled Duke William's mind.

Through the wet wave at Pevensey
The armed host threshed to shore,
And the Duke would first have reached the land
But a light step leapt before
First on the coast of England
Bareheaded with blowing hair
Bounded that unleashed leopard
The young knight, Taillefer.

Sudden abashed and halted
By the Conqueror's loud commands
He paused. Duke William tripped and fell,
The earth in his two hands.
"So I take seizin of England!"
He cried with a surly glare,
Yet caught youth's impish laughter
In the eyes of Taillefer.

Now a thane rode to King Harold
With tidings strange indeed,
And Harold marched for London
Ere the man had turned his steed,
Calling aloud to the muster
All sons of English sires.
The Dragon and the Fighting Man
Flamed southward through the shires.

The Ballad of Taillefer [CONTINUED]

And southward from London muster
And the rood in Waltham's fane
Levies pressed to the Standard
Of the troops that met the Dane,
Till they stood on the heights of Senlac
From all the shires and towns,
Battleaxe men and darters
High on a spur of the downs.

And south on the Hill of Heathland
Duke William, peering, vowed
A minster to St. Martin
Where the English gleamed like cloud.
To the blessing of Bishop Odo
Knelt men from Boulogne and Maine,
Poitevin, Breton, Picard,
That their hope be not in vain.

So the night passed. The morning
Grew gray in the chilly air.
The Conqueror summoned to his tent
The young knight Taillefer.
"Youth would go first!" He eyed him.
"Rashness best fits the fray.
Singer of songs of daring
Lead thou the van today!"

With open eyes of wonder
Youth faced embittered craft.

The Ballad of Taillefer [CONTINUED]

Then, in a flash of vision,
Sudden the young knight laughed,
And a shaft of early sunlight
Struck gold from his tangled hair.
"By the banner of the Apostle,
Yea, sire!" cried Taillefer.

So beyond Telham northward
The Norman knighthood rode.
Billmen and jerkined archers
Through marsh and wasteland strode.
Toustain the White with the banner
Bright glimmering through the haze,
Odo in gleaming armor
By the Bastard of Falaise.

There was to cross the English fosse
And then the host stood still
Where that ash-woven barricade
Frowned from the sloping hill.
A burthened pause ere battle
About the hour of prime,
And sunlight burst upon the downs,
A lark began to climb,

And out from the Norman vanguard
Tossing his lance on high,
Unhelmeted, unheralded
Under the open sky,

The Ballad of Taillefer [CONTINUED]

On a charger that stepped like dancing,
With a song for all to share,
A vivid flame in the sunlight
Rode the minstrel Taillefer.

Taillefer, Cleaver of Iron,
Bearing a name for the strong,
Yet Taillefer, lord of laughter
Thrilling the day with a song
Of Charlemagne and Roland,
Of one hour that mocked despair,
With a glorious voice of victory—
Taillefer! Taillefer!

Swift flew the sleet of arrows
As the English trumpets blew.
Up surged the host of the Normans.
Blood glinted on the dew.
Warriors of Kent and Essex
Shouted defiance back.
Hildebrand's flaming ensign
Mounted to the attack.

But he tossed his lance and caught it
As his charger caracoled,
And high over horn and battle-cry
His ringing singing rolled

The Ballad of Taillefer [CONTINUED]

Taunting, immortal, haunting,
Superb on the sunlit air,
A gauntlet flung in the teeth of Death—
Taillefer! Taillefer!

Then they saw him reel in the saddle
And clutch at the saddle bow
And the fight closed on the hill crest
With curse and clashing blow,
Till at length on a blinded Harold
The shades of Senlac close
And deep in the heart of England
Burns the spear of her foreign foes.

And so wars come and so wars pass—
God knows what end to wars!
Rapine and craft and murder
Under the quiet stars.
Voice of Youth's clearer vision,
O trumpet against despair,
Lift us to surer victory—
Taillefer! Taillefer!

ON EDWARD WEBBE, ENGLISH GUNNER

His troublesome travailes

He met the Danske pirates off Tuttee;
Saw the Chrim burn "Musko"; speaks with bated
breath
Of his sale to the great Turk, when peril of death
Chained him to oar their galleys on the sea
Until, as gunner, in Persia they set him free
To fight their foes. Of Prester John he saith
Astounding things. But Queen Elizabeth
He worships, and his dear Lord on Calvary.

Quaint is the phrase, ingenuous the wit
Of this great childish seaman in Palestine,
Mocked home through Italy after his release
With threats of the Armada; and all of it
Warms me like firelight jeweling old wine
In some ghost inn hung with the golden fleece!

THE PRIEST IN THE DESERT

To Douglas Duer

New Mexico—Sixteenth Century

Blood stained the purple panoply, blood smirched the holy zeal
When Mexico long, long ago learned God from grim Castile.
Great green-plumed Montezuma's folk writhed in a roaring flame.
For this—remembrance in our hearts, remembrance that is shame.

Yet, with no captained companies, when Cortez's fame burned far,
High Marquis of the Valley under the Western Star,—
With no cuirasses ringing, no pomp of banner and sword,
Into the unknown North went forth plain men who served the Lord.

The seven golden cities miraged the golden sand,
But serpents crowned fire-ringed them round, black angels held that land.

The Priest in the Desert [CONTINUED]

Still Coronado's canyon yawns a chasm of awe and dread
Wherein pulse wizard blues of noon and Hell-pits crumbling red;

And rumored grotesque monsters, rock-realms of devilish beasts
On gorgeous painted mesas, seemed gospel to the priests.
Infamous demons flapped the waste on black Satanic wings
With sulphurous breath of hideous death. All men believed these things.

So once, in more than Hell's despite, north strode Fray Estevan,
North from the New Galicia, scourged by the blazing dawn,
Sand burning through his sandals,—far-clumped mesquit and sage
Mazing his sneezing burro's steps,—the skyline quivering rage.

"*Deus in adjutorium meum intende . . . !*" Now
The first five Joyful Mysteries smoothed clear his lifted brow.
At Prime he said his office through with fitting psalms and prayers,
Though the sun a brazen giant clomb his Heaven's golden stairs.

The Priest in the Desert [CONTINUED]

That brazen giant lolled and gazed upon him,
jowl on hands.
Tarantula and scorpion crept rustling through the
sands.
When he said Tierce he felt the fierce scorn of
those barbarous skies.
When at the next he came to Sext, all round flamed
lions' eyes.

At None his thought, by small food stayed, wist-
fully strayed to Spain.
He saw the sanctuary lamp, the tall wax-lights
again;
He saw the tabernacle veil crimson for Pentecost,
The censers swinging at High Mass, the lifting
of the Host.

Fray Estevan, the Jesuit, wandered through cloi-
sters cool.
He stopped to watch a mouthing carp gulp from
the garden pool.
He heard his Novice-master's voice, he chanted
from his stall. . . .
Yet on from None he trod alone waste sands till
Evenfall!

The colors from far mesas died, blue mountains
turned to black.
Ineffable a cooler air breathed down the desert
track.

The Priest in the Desert [CONTINUED]

At Vespers there were stars above—*and shadows long and high.*
The cactus took mysterious forms under the evening sky!

Wild treasure-cities, he had heard, crowded those cliffs so far.
Weird mythologic beast and bird shrieked there to sun and star.
The reek of mad blood-sacrifice sickened his sense afresh,
All devilish and ghoulish things wrought on the shrinking flesh.

His burro sneezed again, behind; gray gophers whisked aside;
Screamed a blue-headed pinyon-jay; a far coyote cried.
Then—stillness and the myriad stars, the *swish-swish* of the sand,—
And Satan's dark familiars prowling the desolate land!

He told his beads the three times through, striving with silent dread:
Pater Noster, Ave Maria, each added *Gloria* said.
His mind clove to the Mysteries, down to Our Lady Crowned.
Less loudly raced his heart, his feet more firmly gripped the ground.

The Priest in the Desert [CONTINUED]

Then, in the solitary night, he touched his burro's
back.
The altar stone lay safely there, the relic in the
pack,—
Chalice and paten and altar wine,—safe were the
wafers too,
And alb and stole and maniple. Courage from
each he drew.

Ah, clearly shone his sacred hour! He saw the
Bishop stand . . .
In awe once more he gazed upon—his consecrated
hand.
Bronzed? In moonlight? Not swathed in white?
. . . Yet fierce-white blazed that tryst
With Heaven! His heart leapt, feeling still the
glorious yoke of Christ.

So, lips apart as if for song, once more he raised
his eyes.
Above the eternal star-sown worlds unfolded deeper
skies
Even to that white bewildering Throne whence
healing thrills on men.
"*Deus in adjutorium—!*" his lips began again.

EUGENIE'S SOLITAIRE

To Kathleen Norris

In a yellow room
Till past mid-night,
A scarf of black lace
Across white hair
And around her face
That, on blue gloom
Or in pale light,
Swims ivory-clear,
She of the fluttering parchment hands
Plays solitaire.

The clock tocks.
Each long black pane
Streams with the rain.
Against the fire
The fire-irons' brass
Glitters like glass,
Or gold, or vain
Desire.
The cards are laid,
The cards are laid
As breaths respire.

Eugenie's Solitaire [CONTINUED]

White and exact
On green baize
The lady lays
Her cards.
Her hand hovers
To see
What the card covers.
She
Thinks swift small thoughts
Of temper—of tact,—
Quickens her hand
Or retards,
Shifting the ill-planned pattern of the cards.

On each card's back
Is a gold crown
And golden curlicues,
A web design.
The cards shine
Brittle as glass, as she
Lays them down
Like a person paying dues:
King—knave—
(You see?)
A heart—a spade for a grave—
A club for a crown—
A diamond to brave
The rabble, like renown,—

Eugenie's Solitaire [CONTINUED]

But not to save!
As the eyes smart,
A spade, a heart,
She lays them down.

Red—black,
A Queen—a Jack,
A Heart—a Spade,—
Black—Red,
A Club—A Diamond instead!
They are laid.
The light flickers;
The room widens;
The walls fade:

Flaring and blazing chandeliers,
Conversational surf seething beneath the lights.
Ices, spilt wine;
Floors that shine
Like glass; a uniform
With a crinoline, that nears;
Bright eyes, bright lips,—
Bright mockeries, bright nights,
And the golden bees aswarm,—

And the fears, and the fears!

Her hand hovers
To see

Eugenie's Solitaire [CONTINUED]

What the card covers.
She
Purses her lips to imaginary roses
In Spain again;
Then the thought closes
Like a black box-lid in her mind.
Her eyes swim blind,
As her hand
Quickens its fluttering movement, or retards
That gesture of a sunny, gallant land.
Red—black (And the rain!)
Blood—death, France and Spain!
Erectly now, imperial again
In her midnight dress,
Exact and passionless,
She plays the cards.

IN THE HOUSE OF HALLUCINATION

—— 1914 ——

What am I saying, Katti? Yes, it's good,
The claret. This room is just the same, *nicht wahr?*
Its walls do not dissolve? Plaster and wood
Somehow cohere, my dear. So here we are,
You and I, facing, thinking, and the storm
About to break. Old friend, we're safe and warm
Just for an instant, though the world without
Topples to crash. Yes, I'll lie down. A-ah, thanks!
Just for a little. An old man with the gout—
All that is left. All Europe forming ranks
For such a war as I foresee and dread.
So—you arrange a cushion for my head.
Danke! I'll try to doze. But the closed eye
Knows the house falling, Katti. One builds it high,
Yet only like a house of cards it stands
Falling forever, slipping through my hands
That are grown so feeble. Do I hear a clock
Striking? It seems to mock—it seems to mock
This house of shadows—and how the shadows spread!

In the House of Hallucination [CONTINUED]

The purgatory of the unredeemed
Uplifts its myriad hands to clutch; the dead
White faces writhe; and every night I've dreamed
Such ghastly dreams . . . until at last she stands
(For all the madhouse whirl, for all the sorrow!)
A cluster of white orchids in her hands,
And there is peace a little—until tomorrow.
(Not like the woman in white, who also comes
Under the raven's wings!) Elizabeth,
Listen! (No, no cessation from the drums
That roll and roll and roll us down to death!)
But—where you are—you can forgive, and see
All you are now, all you are now to me.

So beautiful, so straight upon her horse,
Backing "The Boy" superbly, fearless still
And thoroughbred to finish out the course
For all the slipping avalanche of ill;
Thirst like a Cziko's for the open plain—
Halloo, hoof-thunder, and the loosened rein,—
But delicate, fragile, cold, the edelweiss
That drinks the sun on glacial glares of ice;
At last—Luccheni, by the Mont Blanc quay
Under a heaven as blue as the blue lake,
The boat so near.

It aches so terribly,
One wonders how the heart can fail to break.
Beast! How we suffer! *Beast!* The sky above
Clear as her eyes, pure as their trust and love!

In the House of Hallucination [CONTINUED]

Ah dear, recall Corfu,—your villa there
Against the hill; the rose-field, the sea-wall
Rose-marble; on that purely glittering air
Your heavenly cadences that rise and fall
Reading from Heine in your templed nook
With sunlight patterns shifting on the book.

Life was, we'll say, a puzzle. It resembled
These scroll-work German toys, some print or map
On wood, all cut apart to be assembled
With hair-like lines that scarcely show the gap
If the hands firmly press—but delicate
Of touch lest, with the merest knock or nudge,
The pieces fidget loose. Such was the State
And is. This Nationalism, every grudge
Engendered, and—the hands of power have spasms.
Crevices show, till crevices are chasms.
Hungarian, Italian, Croatian,
Serbian, all the pieces of the nation
In such a maze of jointures, joggling loose!
One needs to be a connoiseur of glues.
My life has just been dabbing every part
With bayonet-bristled brushes. Is it true
Such brushes are too stiff? One trusts the heart
Too little? This Humanitarian glue
Seems thin and pale. I always understood
The best cement was blood. You told me blood,
Mother, my tutors, my marshals, all those leading!
Like old-time surgery, the cure was bleeding.

In the House of Hallucination [CONTINUED]

As to my figure, some pieces interlock
Naturally, it seems. They felt the shock,
In Serbia, for example, when we pried
Herzegovina, Bosnia, from her side
To fit them otherwise. Well, I have tried.

After Sadowa, we should have formed a state
With all the Jugoslavs incorporate
In amity. By the Hungarian pact
We ruined all. Now I perceive the fact.
Language, religion, all we undermined
To cut the wild Serb growth whose roots entwined
So fatally, we thought, the Magyar kind
And Austria's power. At last we could not shun
That solemn rising of the Balkan sun,
Serbia goaded champion in the lists.
Yet the Archduke they slew saw through the mists
A third power in the empire must have place.
We builded pomps of mist without a base
Save on the slaughtered bodies of a race
That heave the empire over, dying not.
So there came plot and plot and counterplot
And the mailed fist, and mouths that out of Hell
Grin their revenge, with taunts I cannot quell!

Such is an empire. So an emperor reigns.
Not just gold candelabra and court-trains,
Uniforms, orders, jewels; a bloody cross,
Rather,—loss on irreparable loss,

In the House of Hallucination [CONTINUED]

And archdukes gibbering with a madhouse leer,
Who should have aided. It is a house of fear
And shade, like Sternberg with its gondola-throned
Blood-royal inmate, where mad Ludwig moaned.
So, dear, you fled to Biarritz, Bruckenau,
Yschl or Ireland,—kept your youth somehow.
My mother sneered; even Charlotte, I aver,
Was jealous—there too! But who was not, of her
Who wished none harm, not even the anarchist.
Charlotte! But though I hear her, I resist
The wild indictment.
That white road seems to twist
Above the Adriatic, skirts the coast
Over the sparkling blue, and then, almost
A league from Trieste, past villas flashing white,
The sea-road ends, and Miramar's in sight,
The castled crag that holds such secrets close.
A *coup d'état* indeed! But then suppose
He had returned as Emperor? The folk
Wanted my abdication. So I spoke
To the Baron over there. To think, with grief,
'Twas, after all, de Morny's base, black heart;
As Bismarck said, "That amiable thief!"
The usurer Jecker, the upstart Bonaparte,—
And so they sold out Max, and, on the day
I took the crown in Buda. . . .
A-ah, they say
Just what they please, despite! 'Twas the De-
cree—

In the House of Hallucination [CONTINUED]

For that they shot him! My note exonerates me.
I'd have returned his rights of the succession
Had he been freed; so why—feel—this oppression
Upon my chest? Such smothering! . . . 'Tis
avouched
He stretched his hand, and every murderer pouched
A golden coin. He cried, "Aim surely, aim,
Muchachos, *here!*"—hand on his heart. How lame
Our schemes are, sometimes. He had that other
trick
I hated, though,—running long fingers slick
Back through his flaxen hair. Eyes of a girl!

Benedek and Sadowa? Yes, there too. . . .
But I must fold my arms against this whirl
Of accusation. If we only knew
What this new murder means! They'll not accede
To such gross terms—they'll never. Ah, poor fool
Of Sarajevo! Boy, you simply freed
The waiting lever. Germany must rule.
Back to Charles Fifth and Francis, and we face
The Gaul against the strong Germanic race.
Louis Fifteenth felt Austria better neighbors?
That was but once. Those days seem idle labors.
When Francis bid for Maximilian's crown
And lost, this centuried blood in which we drown
Was brewed for broaching. Now at last it runs
Red from the spigots of our great steel guns.

In the House of Hallucination [CONTINUED]

One could not change the blood. The blood was
bad.
It must be drawn—though all the world go mad!

It is no dream. Was Meyerling a dream,
And Rudie's murder? The whole long fateful
scheme
Of sorrow on sorrow's head so wearies me. . . .
What do I hear? What do I seem to see?

The great black bloodhound whines at the door,
Sniffs, sniffs, sniffs 'neath the throne-room door,
Whining "War! War! War!"
Pads down each corridor, stands at each stair.
As I pass my chancellor—he is there.
In the great cathedral, kneeling at prayer,
As I lift my eyes to the holy altar,
In the midst of the nave—he is there!

My shoulders shudder, my phrases falter.
As I drive down the Ringstrasse (guards of pride
Plumed and cuirassed, riding beside)
Close within their ranks, where I turn my scowl,
Is the great black head and the onyx glare
Of those two wild eyes, and the slaverous jowl
With its lolled red tongue. He is there, he is there!

Catherine, Catherine, did you dream
What still the Russian dreams? Your school
Of nation-building saw the gleam
From the far-off turrets of Stamboul.

In the House of Hallucination [CONTINUED]

Even then,—aye, even then
Your yellow hand came clutching forth
From your fastness in the North,
On Bulgaria set your mark
And withdrew into the dark
Caldron of your plots again.

Dog that whines, dog that cries,—
Catherine, he has Poland's eyes.
"Light came forth
From the North."
Aye, Voltaire,—and lightning comes.
Harken, I can hear the drums,
Hear the wild "Kol Slaven" rise.
Vultures breed in Northern skies.

You too drained the cup I drain,
Iron, red with battle-stain,
(Hohenlinden, Austerlitz,
Wagram, huge Napoleon,
And the deathly gray of dawn!)
Son of Leopold, you knew
More than I have travailed through;
But the brilliant reptile wits
Of Prince Metternich availed
Had Louisa's marriage failed.
Nay, this is a snarling mood;
Yet—your Christian Brotherhood!
Are alliances like these?

In the House of Hallucination [CONTINUED]

Peace, peace, and there is no peace!
Do I doubt of dynasties?
Is my wandering brain so wild?
Never—hush!
But I recall,
By my archduke father's side
When—in youth (one day of all
Burnt in fire upon my mind!)
In a chapel cool and kind
'Neath a cross where Christ had died
I knelt down . . . and saw a dove
Pass athwart a censer swinging;
And the sound of children singing;
And a holy rose of love
Spread its petals in my heart,
Whispering, " You are but a part
Of an hundred warring nations.
Spread my love among them, child,—
Bring them to their free salvations,
Save my people, rude and wild!"

Well, ah well! But what ablution
Granted, for that " Constitution,"
To these dark and stainéd hands?
Then I planned the risen lands.
Grant it, God! None understands. . . .
Fight the Russian 'gainst the Prussian,
Fight the Prussian 'gainst the Russian;

In the House of Hallucination [CONTINUED]

Austria must have what is hers;
Might makes right!
Yes, ministers,
Chatter on! But it was dark
In that maze. I—missed the mark.

No, Berchtold, no! Say not we ever sold
Our spoils—Schleswig, Venetia—for base gold.
We gave them over, ours to lose outright.
(By Bismarck's theft!) And Lissa sends a light
O'er Europe, Baron! On the other hand
Was Albert—like Radetsky—on the land,
And won Custozza, ere the princely fates
Ended those bloody weeks at Konniggrätz.
(Shadow of Sadowa! Forty thousand dead!
There, as at Solferino, blood was shed.)

Yes, Count Cavour, I hear you. You make free
With your reiteration, "Liberty!"
Italy? I remember Italy.
Is it not branded on the soul of me?
The Quadrilateral—four forts, you see,
Upon which forts turned all our strategy. . . .
What are you saying, Count? Well, give it vent!
Even as Denmark? But at Prague I meant
Good things for Schleswig! It was my intent. . . .
Ah no—no! God is right. 'Tis little use
To palsy penitence with vain excuse.
I am too old, too old!

In the House of Hallucination [CONTINUED]

Peace? Can the Hague
Make true the ruined hopes I built at Prague?
Prussia is very strong—oh, very strong!
Auffenberg needs her. Life is much too long.
I should have leave to die. How hugely spent,
Those Reichstag revenues: massed armament:
And voting more. And England? War-engrossed
Since the first heretoga led his host.

Why are you silent, Berchtold? Do you find
Jebusites man our walls, the halt and blind?
Your smile does not deceive. What can we do?
You know this Nationalism. So you too
Must answer for the juggernaut that comes.
The Serb pot has seethed over. A few crumbs
Of comfort thrown into—a tiger's den.
That for your altruist! Men are but men.
The better rule. The ignorant must obey.

Yes, yes I know, ghosts, what you wish to say!
Yes, yes I know, phantoms! Your writhen lips
Mouth well enough the bitter word that slips
Poisoned from deep-stirred peasant hearts. But I
Have labored for you. . . . *Curse me, then, and die!*
The royal dead, the House that weighs me down. . . .
This is the crown of kings, the Iron Crown!

In the House of Hallucination [CONTINUED]

So! Is he whining at the door,
Still sniffing beneath the throne-room door?
Whining and snarling, "War! War! War!"
Nay, God, he is howling *"War! War! War!"*
All through the Hofburg, wild and dismaying
The black bloodhound is leaping and baying,
Along the corridors, down the halls,
Through the Volkesgarten, over streets and walls,
Clear to the Prater, leaping and running,
Mad with life again, loosed from cunning;
Nose to the ground and tracking Death
With a swinging stride and a growling breath;
Toward the Carpathians hungrily,
From Cracow on—on to the Baltic Sea;
From the Tyrol to Calais hoarsely growling
Over all Europe foaming and howling
"WAR! WAR! WAR!"

So, Hound, you settle one old, old score;
And then—or what are we Emperors for?—
Till the end of the world, more wars and more,
More wars and more!

THE SILVER BALLOON

—— 1915 ——

The soubrette's song still echoing in his ears,
The footlight dazzle still upon his eyes,
He craned to look, and saw the blinded skies
Yield what the searchlight sought. Great shafts like shears
Raked west and east. "How calm that beggar steers!"
He thought, appraising with but small surprise
The floating doom. Two aeroplanes like flies
Crawled up the stars . . . it seemed for years and years.

The searchlights dimmed. The four-point-sevens spoke.
The great bulk lurched a little, loosed a speck,—
And from the crowd fierce pandemonium broke. . . .
He saw no bomb, no flare, no toppling wreck,
But—in his mind—Kensington Garden noons,
And an old woman selling toy balloons.

THE MASTER OF THE FLYING CASTLE

When white canvas towered in tiers
From the sealine, cloud by cloud;
When from roadstead out to offing
All the seas gleamed thick with fame,
In from Java and the East,
From the lairs of god and beast,
With a wake like mermaids dancing,
Aymar's Flying Castle came.

She was laid in Port o' Moonbeams,
She was launched in Noah's prime,
She seemed older than the triremes
As we peered from headland grass.
In her hold was gold and cedar
Out of Tarshish, Tyre and Edar
And she trailed a bannered sunset
On a tide like burning glass.

Aymar, Master of the Cove,
Every salty shipwright knew,
Everywhere a rope was rove
Or a mate signed on a crew;
Trim white house with hollyhocks,
Walk of shells and hedge of box;

The Master of the Flying Castle [CONTINUED]

Meet him rolling down to harbor,
Buttons blazing from his blue.

Bought a black in Mozambique,
Some outlandish port of call;
Brought him home that very week
When we watched her tower so tall;
Be a gardener for the lady,
Keep her little garden close.
How we watched him weed of mornings
With the bangle in his nose.
Soon enough the Flying Castle
Faced the seas where Auster blows.

Talked like Choctaw, did the black;
Lifted gentle dark dog's eyes.
But we scouted through a crack
In his shanty—and were wise.
He would hold the withered charm
High with one long apelike arm,
Muttering, moaning as he swayed,—
Till we crowded close together,
Hurrying homeward—yes, and prayed!

When the Autumn storms were brewing
And the trees were leaved with flame,
Like a lover to proud wooing
Home the Flying Castle came;

The Master of the Flying Castle [CONTINUED]

Goblins jigging in her rigging
Were the freezing flaws of spray;
Every samphire-bearded Triton
Greenly hailed her on her way.

Plunging, rearing like a stallion
In the trough and through the crest;
Bulking golden as a galleon
On the witchcraft of the West;
Purple night in all the shrouds
Of her tropic-tinted clouds,
Till the headland flowered its beacon—
And the Fiend stood manifest!

Mumbling more and more by fits,
White of eyeball rolled askance,
Worked the black's weird secret wits,
Till we feared and fled his glance,
Till one night the dark infernal
Ritual rose to dim nocturnal
Toil by moonlight—oil and kindlings—
And a trancelike moonlight dance.

Blood was smeared upon the portal.
(Only voodoos understand!)
Out of terror stark and mortal,
Shriek on shriek—a smothering hand.
Then the crackling rose to roaring
And the swarms of sparks went soaring
And the house flared like a pharos
To the Castle, close off land.

. . . . . .

The Master of the Flying Castle [CONTINUED]

Aymar's face was gray and shrunken,
Aymar's voice was but a croak,
Aymar's eyes were charred and sunken
And they burned you, when he spoke;
Tottering palsied, as if drunken,
Through hushed streets he did not see,—
And the Flying Castle rotting,
Sunk and sand-filled, off the quay!

DUST OF THE PLAINS

Rails unreeling past the brass gate-bars,
Loud-capped tourists with brown cigars,
Idle chatter and a giggling girl,
And the plains' dust rising whirl on whirl—
Rising and spreading like eagle wings,
Ghostily hosting the redskin kings!

A bed of live coals the sunset sky,
All cherry embers, pulsed on high.
Mesas like giant buffalo
Loomed, like the ghosts of long ago.
And the silver rails reeled out, thinned far
From the *clickaclacket* of our flying car.

Oglallas, Arapahoes, fighting Utes
Wheeled from the shadow of the buttressed buttes;
Painted Sioux, Cheyennes, Shoshones,
Clinging, swinging from their piebald ponies;
Squaws and tepee-poles trailing by
Through the purple twilight of the flaring sky.

Bears' claws and beads on twisted wires,
Sign of the Seven Council Fires,
War-bonnets dancing, feathered with flame,
Out of the golden dust they came,

Dust of the Plains [CONTINUED]

Trotting, trotting their ancient trail,
Lo-hallooing their spectral hail:

They that crouched ere our time began,
Smoking the pipe of Powhatan;
Kin of the panther, hawk, and snake:
Birch canoes on the moonlit lake,
Creeping death on the forest path,
Wind of the desert, whirling wrath!

Wild and vigilant, stoic, fierce,
Circling the road of the pioneers;
Spirits of lightning, wind, and rain,
And the golden corn of the open plain;
Bronzed hard riders with flying hair,
Lords and gods of the open air!

Out of the dust, the dust of the plain,
In phantom phalanx they rise again;
Far from our cities of stone and glass,
Restless forever their legions pass;
Red Cloud and Black Moon's silent braves
Filling the West like an ocean's waves!

Black stood the mesas against the sky,
Gorges tossed back our clamoring cry.
Back from our track fled the skein of rails,
Binding the distance, bearing the mails,
Winding the world on steely thread,
And "Let me tell you—!" a drummer said.

THE RACE

Your pursed lips suddenly sucked in a sound that your horse
Leapt to. He tossed his head and stretched his muzzle,
Hauling the reins, and started off at a canter.
Riding astride in your heavy McClellan saddle,
With straight flat back—in white shirtwaist and high white stock
And black cocked hat—you wavered against the hills,
On that broad white road, a clear, clean flame to me,
Blowing into the glory of the sun
Over the marshes.

Caleppit—caleppit—caleppit!
The hoofs of my horse rang out in sudden pursuit
Little puffs of dust like shots from gnomish rifles
Followed your horse's flying heels. The road
Rose and fell before us, as over a ridge
By a ranch we clattered, and slanted around a curve
Where a sheep-dog barked from a byre. The high sun moved
Following us.

The Race [CONTINUED]

I saw you sling your quirt
Lightly over the flank of the reaching roan,
And the easy cradle-motion beneath me told
How my horse was nearing a run.
The wind from the Straits
Came slashing into our faces. The dusty road,
Hard under hoof, racketed with our flight.
A dooryard fluttered orange poppies. A team
Drew into the dusty, bitten border grass
To watch us by. A winding herd of cows
Stopped to stare from a mounded hill, in the cloak-
spread shadow
Of crooked live-oaks. Out on that strip of steel,
Beyond the marshes, some veering red-brown sails
Of Portuguese fishermen made for a ramshackle
pier.
The hills, like a humping school of porpoises,
Kept pace with us on the left, and luring white
The road ran on before.

A stretch of sand
Muffled the hoofs, and seemed to check us. Then
Caleppit—caleppit—caleppit! again. And neither
gaining . . .
Pursuer, pursued, and all a flowing illusion!

You rode in a cloud, and I in a cloud. We moved
Like the wistful-tingeing sunlight of afternoon
That glinted far out on the slowly-turning wings

The Race [CONTINUED]

Of an inland-drifted gull. And high and still
A dark hawk hovered. Our eyes, astare with speed,
Dilated into a bright indifferent sky.

And then you pulled on the reins, and I tugged,
and the horses,
Snorting and sweating, were wrestled back to a trot,
And we laughed and ambled along in companionship
While I was thinking, "I wonder if she is the
One?"
And you, perhaps, "I really wonder if he——?"
Both meanwhile talking scattered half-chaffing
things,
One of your leather gauntlets busied about your
hair,
I fumbling in my khaki coat for a pipe,
Each in youth's calm pursuit
Of a magnificent and mateless dream!

THE VOYAGE

My father came to me across the grass.
Seating himself in a chair of Chinese straw
His clever eyes peered at me askance,
Mutely appraising.

"You think you wish to go?" he suddenly said.

I munched at pepper berries.
The sun sloped on the summer afternoon.
The fountain trickled.
The leaves of my book stirred idly.

I said, "I'll go!" I got upon my feet.

Moonlight that night had something more to say
Than for long, O long!
The California house, beloved and rambling
Held games and meals and reading, wood-fires crackling,
Familiar voices
Arguing kindly
And dreams—but—the dream of dreams—!

The Voyage [CONTINUED]

High in my moonlit room I lay, star-haunted.
I pondered also the look in my father's eyes.

. . . . . .

The engines tramp and stamp from the narrow alleyway
Between my stateroom and the malodorous galley
Of the big rhythmically-quivering Army Transport.
The galley-gang, whose chief is a coal-black negro
Fit for a fez in any Soudanese regiment,
Splash and clatter the dishes and jabber their jocularity.

Washed for supper, I cross from the door to the rail,
Roll a smoke from small brown fluttering papers
And watch grape-colored water frothing by
Where the flashing log
Trails and leaps like a flying-fish.
Elbow to elbow along the rail—
Coal-passers, engineers, non-coms—and I!

Next me is "Chuck," his cheerful full-moon face
Florid, aglisten. Beefy of bulk is he,
A comic fat boy—truly, hard as nails.
He is anxious to prove that to you, anxious to show
That his genial views are backed by excellent brawn.
He wears his cap one side and his mouth one side.
He struts a trifle, swinging his big pink arms.

The Voyage [CONTINUED]

He has straw-colored hair and freckles, and mops
his neck
And looks you over, and blurts a question, and grins,
And vents his airy soul and expressive slang
On the building sunset sky.

I sit at mess
On the right of the stocky ferocious second mate.
(As to face and voice—his heart
Is as soft as the puddled butter!) "Well, young
fellah,
Got yer braces hitched to climb the mainmast—
huh?"
"They got one pipe aboard this boat!" "What's
that?"
"It's that Deck Yeoman's job!" "Well, y'see,
when I
Was just that green—" . . . "Yeah, I told the
Chief, but he—"
"What's she done today? Two-forty?" . . .
"Pass the spuds!"
Grinning, in some unease, I sand my coffee,
Unclog the condensed-milk can,
And plunge into floury biscuits and corn-beef hash.

In the murmurous, melancholy
Star-hung evening of the Pacific Ocean,
With the ship bowling, passengers strolling above,
My clerk-jobs done for the day, and the little eyes

The Voyage [CONTINUED]

Of our cigarettes atwinkle through purple velvet,
The goo-goos for'ard tune their mandolines,
They tremor our lazy dreams
With the flickering twinkle-tinkle of mandolines.
On the upper deck the passengers—white moths
or stalking ghosts—
Turn and clot by the rail.
Or the ship's phonograph starts with a raucous
burr,
(Lugged down from the saloon.)
It whirrs to the nasal yowl of a popular song.
It erupts barbaric black-face dialogue,
Flinging brazen badinage at the big white moon
That splashes the vast dark sea with silver coins.
The flying smoke blows backward from our stacks
In writhing patterns.
Beneath, the deep-shadowed deck
Is blanched as white as bone.

Cliffs and cliffs rising out of the sea
In the weeping dawn.
Low cliffs, far cliffs, a strange coast lifting;
Shouts of sunrise—that first enchanted harbor!

Sleek brown boys dive like shimmering fish for
coins.
Shouts and banging trucks concatenate gangplank
clatter.
Stores shoot out on the wharves. Diaphanous
dresses and laughter

The Voyage [CONTINUED]

And starchy white fill the passenger-deck and the gang-way.
I stretch my legs on the dock, with the hurly-burly
Ramping around me in hot and dizzy sunlight.
I work, and the itching sweat is in my eyes,
But the sun is in my heart.

I checked freight in Manila.
Perched on the canvas cover of a hatch,
Watching the bales swing outboard, and the boxes,
Or sneezing down in the hold
In a golden shaft of dusty sunlight,
While the natives jabbered,
I checked and checked the freight, and surreptitiously
Scribbled verses, and checked the freight again.

"Chuck," Lord, "Chuck," you almost burst my ribs,
Thin as I am, and nearly split the sides
Of that rickety caromata we grandly hired.
(But no one walks!)
Before us our withered brown driver's nightshirt flapped
As he squatted nearly upon his pony's rump.
Our two-wheeled chariot rattled with amazing speed
For the size of that pony!

The Voyage [CONTINUED]

Remember the cock-fight we saw; the horrible
messes
They sold outside, for a snack; the gabble-gabble
Of contestants, umpires, backers; the segregation
Of seats, the unbearable odors, the whirring birds
Slicing each other with twinkling spurs, fluff-ruffed
With peckishness?
And the gawping beaten bird
Flopping in blood on the sawdust!

Remember the night our driver drove us out
Far into damp deep-foliaged moonlit country,—
Slipped down to fix the harness, and we got ready
For an owl-like whistle, for bandits from the
jungle?
Bandits? Bolo-men with butcher-knives!
It was only the harness though. A piece of string
Had busted!

Do you remember the Chinese shops
Still lit and doing business round by dawn,
Narrow booths with flickering jets of glare
Flinging high shadows behind the bronze-like
figures
That sat or shuffled within, whose slanted eyes
Held centuries? And the stately old walled city,
The drowsing Bridge of Spain?
And, "Chuck," do you remember

The Voyage [CONTINUED]

The faces behind the lattices in those mysterious
houses
Our driver thought we meant,—that sailor reeling
Across the road, shaking his fist and cursing
" Robbery! " at the wink of a closing door?

Eternal rain on the Pasig,
Eternal mournful rain; and then one night
The band on the luneta, among the open carriages,
Soothed our blistered souls with—Sousa's marches!

But ah, the bells and the boats and the lights of the
launches,
The bulk of big ships in the darkness, the scurry
of sampans,
My breathless embrace of a dream as we smoothly
glided
Into Nagasaki harbor,—
O the swish of our rickshaws, the racing rickshaw
men,
The shops like a Fair, like a jeweled peacock-fan
Waved on a night alight with Arabian visions,—
The ludicrous things we bought at the little booths!

All day I saw them coaling.
I saw the wonderful unfaltering ease
With which a basket mounts from hand to hand
Of stringy native and small brown native woman,
An endless chain of purely primitive labor

The Voyage [CONTINUED]

All through the time of siesta.
I remember the little children filling baskets,
The little brown children scampering round the cascoes
Filled with coal.
And I remember
That Irish quartermaster who yarned of the Yangtze
He had sailed on a battleship, and the Hoangho.
One night, under a davit,
He told us, and showed us a pasteboard box he carried
Filled with a set of dragon-patterned china
For his mother in San Francisco.

I remember the half-doped derelict
Who stopped a few of us going ashore one night,
Pleading to only be smuggled back to the States.
The Ancient Mariner! He used to be
A gob. He called himself "a Navy man."
Drink had done him. Part way sober at least
He had flunkeyed Chinamen, played in a vaudeville troupe
Of Japanese, and drifted back to the port
Crawling through rubbish and refuse for a living,
Drained by disease and the climate, maudlinly
Sobbing for home, for home.

Harbor waters of dream, where even tragedy
Turned fantastic!

The Voyage [CONTINUED]

O were dying only the proud advance of a ship
Into mirrored starlight, to which descend the walls
And streets of a moon-white city whose phantom piers
Dance with brilliant lanterns of salutation!
I should find my florid Pythias, honest "Chuck,"
A roustabout of those eternal quays,
Heaving a cask athwart a doughty hip
To roll it into the shed. I can hear him sing
"Hey, cul! Who let you in? They do get keerless.
Some job I've got here—hey?"
And I, why I
Would draw and fill a small brown cigarette
With Bull, and twist the end, and proffer it;
And he would stick it in a beaded face
And scratch a match on his pants.

So, after the day and the job,
In a twilight of blue tobacco,
Under golden awnings,
Gazing over the harbor to the white night-waking city
Where lazy bells had tinkled in weed-grown courtyards
Through the sweltering afternoon,—
Where, in dim old cloisters the dark old Spanish paintings,
Cracked and smeared with age, somberly dream of scourgings

The Voyage [CONTINUED]

And fast and penance and strange ineffable
vision,—
Gazing thither, or past the spectral sea-wall
Where sea-birds flash and settle in the sunset,
Where smoke on the bright horizon
Stands like a spire,
The spire of a sunken city, of jasper walls,
Of life one tumult of perilous fond adventure—
Unending glimmering dream of starry youth!—
Then would we muse and remember, truly remem-
ber?
Aye, "Chuck," indeed!

ALONG THE EMBARCADERO

Along the Embarcadero
By stanchion, plank and rope,
The masts and crosstrees lifted
And funnels at the slope.
The wharfinger offices,
The rattling winch and crane
Were struck with dazzling sunlight
That dreamed of ancient Spain.

Along the Embarcadero
The Slav and Swede and Finn
Tried many a rotgut liquor
At many a sordid inn,
Yet ghosts of earringed seamen
Crowded the tangled spars
Above the scattering clanging
Of the Belt Line cars.

Tramp-schooner, bark and steamer,
Both passenger and freight,
Beguiled the boyish dreamer
Beyond the Golden Gate—

Along the Embarcadero [CONTINUED]

Alaska or New Zealand,
Siberia or Japan—
Oh, seas forever singing
To the sailor-man!

Along the Embarcadero
House-flags from East and West
The goddess San Francisco
Has gathered to her breast.
Along the Eastern seaboard
The wistful sunsets say
"Man, when are you returning
To San Francisco Bay?"

THE CITY

To Robert H. Davis

I WENT forth to sing the city, today's city—
  The blank stone sphinx, the monster search-light-eyed,
The roaring mill where gods grind without pity,
  The falling torrent, the many-colored tide.

Granite and steel upflung became my fountains,
  Cunningly reared and held as by a spell.
Lost in colossal stone, my newer mountains,
  I wandered witlessly through miracle.

And snared in tiny toils both frail and idle
  I lost my wonder as I had lost my stars,
Though here a mammoth heaved no man might bridle,
  A terrible symphony rolled through crashing bars.

But small and obvious life fogged every wonder
  And itching needs and each small thirst and lust.
Over me and about me roared the thunder
  Of the city's heart; I trafficked with its dust.

The City [CONTINUED]

Yet beyond Babylon its ways were regal;
  Even Jerusalem its dreams outsoared.
Loins of the lion and splendor of the eagle,
  Where swarming vermin hailed it god and lord;

Where hardly one could touch, save to defile it,
  The dream phantasm it spread aloft at night;
Where men snared men, and made all men revile it,
  Save in its moments of bewildering light.

Yet men had thought and raised and poised its splendor,
  And fed the torrents of its living veins,
And had fallen prone before it in surrender,
  Seeing its awful being repay their pains.

A living being, but blind, where all misprision
  Flourished and fattened, and, lashed as by a scourge,
Flowed fear-struck crowds—yet dupes of some strange vision
  As on the instant ready to emerge,

But ever foiled—and still forever trembling
  Just past the reach of mind, the urge of will;
Sum of all jaded aims and drab dissembling,
  Something unbuilded, to be builded still!

The City [CONTINUED]

So once again, almost against desire,
The appalling city unsealed the eyes she sealed,
Until her darkest streets ran weltering fire
For thought of love at point to be revealed.

So all their eyes are fixed on mine forever,
Eyes of dark pain, unfathomable will:
Something unbuilded, to be builded—never?
Something unbuilded, to be builded still!

WHEN THE CATERER SANG OF HIS WEDDING

To Sinclair Lewis

To a crumbly wine-tanged writhing of macaroons,
A tarantella of dwarf green anchovies,
The rainbow-bubbled surf from claret seas
Under delicate confectionary moons,
Where aspic islands quivered with white whipped
cream,
Flung high the dancing dream.

Fluttering round brown quails with crispéd skin
And gilt-foiled bottles aslant in glittering ice,
Florentine gravies, sauces bold with spice,
Scrolled rolls—all conscious courses suave as sin—
Came the white breeze of napkin seeking chin,
The undermunch so flattering and so scorning,
And a hint of phantasmagorias to begin
In the very early morning!

The tart black-jellied beads of caviare,
White sleek asparagus in mayonnaise,
Stuffed peppers stifled from their natural blaze
By celery chips; striped trout with sauce tartare;

When the Caterer Sang [CONTINUED]

Brindled potatoes to make the palate burn,
Olives and almonds salted crisp and thin,
Black coffee coifed with neufchâtel—a djinn
Risen from the silver urn—

In animate masque these jigged upon a frieze
Where golden pheasants mixed with sky-blue trees,
Then vanished. Terrace by terrace, upward sprang
White as bright frost, that palace of glamouries
Built to the wild and golden god Meringue.
Perilous carven sweetness brittly built,
With curlicued devices pink and gilt,—
Wizarded mist such as the moon doth make!
On solider foundation fitly planted
Where now a gleaming knife descended, slanted,
And portioned melting slabs of angel cake. . . .

Thus, on an evening when his moon was blue,
Since Ermintrude had kissed him in the dark,
The caterer sang the greatest things he knew,
Dancing round Rockbridge Park!

METAMORPHOSIS—NOT IN OVID

To Sinclair Lewis

To think behind a bib or in a crib
May lurk some modernized Sennacherib!

Awed saucer eyes and bland uncertain smile,
Will they gull thousands in a little while?

That imperturbable art of blowing bubbles
To stoop to diagnosing liver troubles!

That twinkling candor and artless lurching gait,
Lost, lost in ministerial robes of state!

O solemn babies, so absurd and antic,
My silent apprehension drives me frantic.

Away with horoscope and astrolabe!
I shall not read the stars for any babe.

Yet—laurelled Cæsar, in short dress and socks,
Sits, fatly chuckling, toppling building-blocks.

Kings, dustmen, clowns, Napoleon, Scaramouch,
Chew cap-strings from each blanketed barouche.

Metamorphosis—Not in Ovid [CONTINUED]

Through their contemplative fixed scrutiny
The world's weird unknown future winks at me!

THE HERETIC

"THEN," said my Angel, "I leave you!"
"So!" whispered my Devil, "I come!"
But my lips framed no regretting;
I stood struck dumb.

With pathos the angels would grieve you;
With threats the devils would fright.
Man travails within, begetting
A god of light.

Now though all Heaven bereft me
Of flowers and music's sound,
Now though all Hell, to win me,
Flamed red around,

Only one thing was left me,
One only since time began:
To speak the truth that was in me
And play the man.

THE LONELY

You're away, and best away; yes, it's best for you,
Out in a white and a trim ship on the salty blue.
O you're a happy man, sailor! May all that's good betide
Your landfall and your home-coming and the harbor where you ride. . . .
Let you forget the ghosts that walked when the fog was overside!

And you're ajog by hill and bog and striding up the scarp
Where the wind has famous trees to flog and harps an iron harp.
Your valley lamp, your evening star, your white street in the moon—
May the house you seek have its door ajar, and she stand in it, soon. . . .
Let you forget the graveyard wall and the spectres' rigadoon!

And I'm away in jeweled caves, wishing myself as well,
On Eastern isles the tide-turn laves, bound by a master-spell;

The Lonely [CONTINUED]

And I'll not shiver for ghosts or graves, nor knock
my pipe and brood—
*But when the blood of the heart craves, and cries
and finds no food*
*Lonelier far than earth or sea the mind's vain
solitude!*

ENIGMA

Imperishable trust
Even in the vagrant wind that blows the dust
Painting the sunset to our clouded gaze;
Even in the stone that is
Compact of verities
We cannot know, or, if we know, despise!

Strange limits, laws as strange
Of the eternal prison where we range
Traversing but bewildered by its days!
Think, and be filled with awe;
The very breath you draw
If on this wise, how strangely on this wise!

RENCONTRE

No, I am not so cold as that. I would
Not have you read my mind. And that is all. Let be!
No, I am not so bold as that. I could
Not grasp and soil your spirit shining free.
And something in your own I would not have
Fasten on mine and feed. For something comes between.
And so this is as other things have been.

O brilliant broken lights of life! I thrill
To your allure. Awhile I shiver in your blaze.
O still unspoken heights, ere the fixed will
Stabs with its blinding beam the drowsy haze!
Then comes the shudder and the little laugh
And we are gladly free of the decreed unseen—
And this time is as other times have been.

Admitting, I accept my loss. We seek
A different shrine, although set in the same cliff-face.
Fitting the purpose is. We are not weak
Nor rancorous of each other in the race.

Rencontre [CONTINUED]

This trifling time may yet be balm to salve
The sharp and sudden wounds with which all time
is keen;
So let this be as other times have been!

So let us smile and pass. And if you go
Through death to life, or from your puzzled life
to death,
(Knowing as little as the wisest know),
At least for me you draw no troubled breath;
And I shall have a peaceful epitaph—
Who might in Ilium have gazed on Helen queen,—
Save that this is as other things have been!

THE PHILOSOPHER

To have been far places, yes that indeed were
merry;
To have seen immortal faces,—ah yes, that were
well;
White steeds in golden traces and golden chariots
burning,
Red cap and laureled column and a crazed world
turning
Round your world-applauded triumph—a stirring
thing to tell;
Yes, yes, that were all very
Well!

There's many a plain and many a mountain, many
a city,
Many a glittering epoch,—O yes, that may
be;
But all the hearts exalted, and all the spirits shat-
tered
That burned like fields afire, have not so greatly
mattered
Though a mighty stir they made as they strove to
make free;
And if that be so, God pity
Me!

The Philosopher [CONTINUED]

For I feel as if tonight it were all a mere phantasm
A flowing of blue clouds and of dim-colored shapes;
A game of curious symbols that shine and lose
their meaning
'Twixt the light that blinds them and the dark
that's screening,
In a fiery fitful twilight where we moil but none
escapes
Save at last where the dark chasm
Gapes.

Leave then your talk of towns, talk of crowns and
wreathes and kisses;
Sit you silent in the starlight where the leaves
whisper low;
It is strange enough, at least, that our minds are
still turning
Our eyes still asearching, our pulses still burning!
Chink like coins in the hand all your memories of
old woe;
That turns them into blisses,
You know!

FRIENDS

To Anne McMichael Hoyt

Walking a lonely street, I thought,
One thing warms more than fire
Or wine, and is not sold or bought
At any man's desire,
And, unlike love, not wholly of
Passion too near despair—
Yet walls around a sacred ground
And builds a secret stair.

Friends—that can set the mind aglow
With their unfading light
And steel the soul at overthrow
Against the ceaseless fight,
And, beautiful beyond men's worth,
Walk on the walls of Time,
Because in dearth they turned our earth
To mirth and ringing rhyme.

I'll add it to the mysteries
That start on every side.
Whoever knows and keeps the keys
Whereto all heaven swings wide

Friends [CONTINUED]

Through hours that pass—as in a glass
Pass golden clouds and slow—
He gave our friends for certain ends,
Far greater than we know.

TO MY FATHER

I

You rhymed like Lear for us when we were small.
Our walks with you were full of things mysterious
Made magic by your twinkle and half-drawl,
Because we could not tell if you were serious.
You rose to some occasions quite imperious,
" Explained " the jokes to us in comic papers,
And read us Russian fairy-tales, the shapers
Of visions grim, fantastic, and delirious.

You laughed at us and teased us and regarded
Our mediæval lives with understanding;
And often there were monsters that you warded
Away with words unique and mirth commanding.
We'd hang across the landing till we'd fall,
Waiting to hear your step down in the hall.

II

" Well, bears! " or " How is Little John tonight? "
" The man who made this match, my son, must be
a—"
" Oh, Father, you'll not *please* turn on the light
Until we hear what happened to Gackelea! "

To my Father [CONTINUED]

"Dark? Nonsense! Read? A very strange idea!"
The leather chair at last denounced this attitude,
And, coiled at various lengths, we breathed beatitude
Before some world's-end castle on Mount Moria.

There, at endearing sprawl that never cost your
True dignity the loss of one iota,
We would regard you from precarious posture,
Squirming with exclamation points, or stilly
As a hushed mouse, while thrillingly you'd quote a
Rhyme, or wake fairies in a tiger-lily.

III

Time, the dark whale, spouts blithely from his spiracle
A jet of memory that makes glad the sun.
In you the intuition for true fun
Wrought us the breathless and quotidian miracle.
You taught us words like these with pomp satirical,
And I have but to listen and I hear
Your voice croon, "Shed no tear, oh shed no tear!"
Swayed between the ironic and the lyrical.

Hard lines in Cæsar, equations in quadratics,
Charades, acrostics, walks that made us pant
And sit on stones because our breath was scant
And our legs short; the furbishings from attics,

To my Father [CONTINUED]

Furniture, daily bread, child-grief that stings,
You took, transformed, and made amazing things.

IV

Yet you have looked, even as all men must,
On the Medusa, and looked down her eyes.
Now I perceive it, in my time made wise
Though not with half the valor or the trust;
Your spirit blue as steel unflecked by rust,
Your mind forever snapping dragon-flies
Whimsical at their sheen, their sting of lies
But relish, where so soon all things are dust.

You held life to us like a twirling prism
Nor flinched a facet with your curious gaze.
You said, "Yes, so it sparkles, so it sways."
You hated, loved, and smiled. No syllogism
Had said the last. All ways you cast your looks
And walked the world and read a thousand books.

V

You had the touch, the gesture, the exact
Quick divination for a thing well-said.
Sometimes I only find in what you read
To us your overtones, that drove the fact
Of greatness home with thrust, that thrid close-packed
And marvelous Browning with a tongue in cheek,
Thrilled to him on his heights, enjoyed his Greek,
And so took all the gods, with spacious tact.

To my Father [CONTINUED]

Your detestation inchoate Carlyle
Turned Prussian-blue; your weakness, Stevenson.
(" They " call it weakness!) In the lucky-bag
Of literature you angled, for a while
Parceled the patchwork, when the day was done
Knew every banner from every bogus rag.

VI

You found a quartz-stone, Duty, and you found
A white lamp, Truth, and Honor, a sweet fire,
Whose ways are up the jagged crags that tire
But whose domain has azure for a ground
Where trumpets snarl no more but golden sound
Hangs rapt like the great ending of a song.
There you have peers. There all your years belong
Who took that road, slung with a magic lyre.

Your hands would never touch it, but in shade
Of your proud thoughts, your dreams, to childrens' ears
What men will never know, but the heart hears
And sees bright-meteored mount the frowning years,
All of itself, all of itself it played
That high fantastic tune your spirit made!

TRICKSTERS

To Vachel Lindsay

I AM bewildered still and teased by elves
That cloud about me even through city streets.
One sings a stave and one a dream repeats,
One, crueller, in some old resentment delves.
I am aware they are my other selves,
Yet to what dazzling vision each entreats,
Casting a glamour over shams and cheats,
Ennobling cant, buzzing by tens and twelves!

So then my smiling grieves the passerby.
I strut in all vocations not my own,
Wearing the centuries like a baldric slung;
Whilst shabby I gawk at this splendid I.
Chronos and Momus through my lips intone,
Archangels, heroes,—rascals yet unhung!

BEING CURIOUS

To Stephen

I did not think the patriarch would speak
But, as he slept, and dribbled at lip for drouth,
I stuck a salty olive in his mouth
Green with the juicy greenness of a leek.
He swayed a little on his throne of teak
And the fruit vanished. An afreet from the south
Stood straight before us, like as when one vow'th
Splendor to Baal. My legs got very weak.

Yet, even so, I thought, he'll cry—he'll bid—
And there will be a tablet raised to me!
O grief! The patriarch gestured with his thumb.
Truth from one more awed generation hid,
And I so safe beneath this greenlit sea,
And the unanswered riddle, " Is he dumb? "

O'CONNOR'S CAFE

Greenwich Avenue, near Sixth

WHERE JOHN MASEFIELD AFORETIME TENDED BAR

They'll have "apartments" on the upper floors
And shops below, here where the crossways meet,
Where "L" trains shake high trestles down the street
And idle loungers lean from dirty doors.
No more some shrewd-eyed Bacchus shakes and pours
Glittering decoctions when the Spring is sweet
With violet twilight, or through festering heat
Of summer, while the eternal traffic roars.

O'Connor's passes, and that tall Bastille
With clock-face ever owlish of late hours
Rules on, where once a strange young sailor passed
To scour bar bright-work, dream of nights at wheel
On vast dark seas, and to invoke such powers
As guard his greatness here until the last.

MENAGERIE

To Don Marquis

One is a beaver with a wrinkled nose,
One is a weasel,—and I do declare
I see a melancholy small ant-bear,
Curled furriness that snuffles at its toes!
The wombat is both sleepy and morose,
The Bengal tiger-cub has such a stare
Of topaz! Two white lemmings sit at prayer
With proper paws, superior to foes.

The taxidermist with scissors at his waist
Enters my heart and says, before them all,
(But then he always waves a silver charm!)
"*They should be stuffed!*" I eye him with distaste.
My sins are so bright-eyed and warm and small,
The little animals that mean no harm!

FROM SPARTA

Your voice is perilous to me. Your clear
Unconscious voice and delicate cameo face,
Quaintly coiled hair and subtly careless grace
Lead me too close to quiet brinks of fear.
Just for a space my fire-maned fancies rear
Raked by the snaffle and the grinding curb.
Then, I sink back to stone, and you disturb
My facile thought no more. But you are dear
As the mysterious sky, the glittering sea,
The ending of a peerless symphony
That very breath might shatter to discoid;
Fragility, brimmed with mesmeric light,
Though held against immense and starless night,
And sacred as the stillness round a sword.

THE FOIL

Thank God for all the wrath of hypocrites
That burnishes the blade of truth so bright!
Thank God indeed for malice, envy, spite,
Fated to crown and throne their opposites!
Else might we, for a lack of babbling wits,
Lose true comparative to judge that height
Where thunder-crowned, with lightning for a light,
Wild and benign the winged archangel sits.

Even his cup of fiery agony
Must fill with wine of mirth to overrun
When pismires urge on ants that moon and sun
Err in an orbit! And so anew we see,
With lifted eyes, what things the planets are,
How even all heaven can burn through one pale
star.

CHARLES DARWIN

To Henry Seidel Canby

This is the soul who sought and found new keys
To Life, and bade Man rise and grasp his powers;
Who wrested many a secret from the flowers
And cast a shadow on bright hierarchies.
Patient to ponder, he mounted stormy seas
Of bigot wrath, met craft that skulks and cowers,
And searched laborious years and days and hours
To link the primrose with the Pleiades.

The Cordilleras than any church more holy
He found, Brazilian forests long adored,
Turned to his task of truth and fathered slowly
Man's honest search, while men cried, "God, our Lord!"
Protesting still in weakness. This is he
Who raised a temple to integrity.

NIGHT

To Christopher Morley

Let the night keep
What the night takes,
Sighs buried deep,
Ancient heart-aches,
Groans of the lover,
Tears of the lost;
Let day discover not
All the night cost!

Let the night keep
Love's burning bliss,
Drowned in deep sleep
Whisper and kiss,
Thoughts like white flowers
In hedges of May;
Let such deep hours not
Fade with the day!

Monarch is night
Of all eldest things,
Pain and affright,
Rapturous wings;

Night [CONTINUED]

Night the crown, night the sword
Lifted to smite.
Kneel to your overlord,
Children of night!

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